

C 273147

for what I have said. I should like to commend to this house and to the people of Canada the thoughtful, able and challenging address made here earlier to-day by the hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker). I agree 100 per cent with nearly everything he has said. I know that there has been a sense of frustration in connection with the examination of the war expenditures of bygone days. I think it would be wise if these committees are to be reestablished, that they be open to the public, and that the whip should be taken off. I am told that the whips are there and that when the danger point is approached the lid is closed. That ought not to be, in the present situation.

Mr. GOLDING: That is not true.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): All right; I have not first-hand information. I was not present, but that is the report given to me by those who represented us on those committees. I am not going to say anything more about it now.

Mr. McLLRAITH: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I wish to go on with my speech.

Mr. McLLRAITH: On a question of privilege in that connection, some hon. members here, and I was one, sat on that committee. No such pressure was exerted in any manner whatsoever on me as a member of the committee. I wish to make that perfectly clear. In saying what he has said I feel that the leader of the opposition tends to cast a reflection on the members who sat on the committee.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Well, if the hon. member takes it that way I cannot help it, but does he say there was free wide-open discussion?

Mr. McLLRAITH: Yes, he does say so.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): That is not my information. I am content to leave it there.

My intention was to rise to-day in connection with what I am informed and believe are certain anomalies in the national war service regulations. I regret that the minister in charge of that department is not at the moment in his seat, because my remarks will be largely directed to him. He was here earlier in the afternoon, but is not here now.

It will be recalled by members of this house that the National Resources Mobilization Act was passed in June, 1940, after the fall of France; and that upon that act being passed a national registration was held, in August of that year. In my understanding, that was predicated upon the theory of a

[Mr. Hanson (York-Sunbury).]

national stock-taking of the man and woman power of Canada at that time, and their availability for service. The cost of that registration was upwards of \$900,000; and I am bound to say that so far the evidence of the results flowing from that registration has not been anything like commensurate with the expenditure involved and the effort expended, much of which was given to the country gratuitously. So far as I have been able to ascertain, practically speaking the only use that was made of the national registration was to draw out the cards of the men of military age. There may have been other uses; if there were, they have not been brought to my attention.

I pause here to direct the attention of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King), the members of the government and the Minister of National War Services (Mr. Thorson) himself, to what to me is a rather astonishing answer to a question placed on the order paper by the hon. member for Jasper-Edson (Mr. Kuhl) and answered in this house by the minister on March 9. If hon. members will turn to page 1223 of *Hansard*, they will see exactly what I mean. On that occasion the hon. member asked the government these questions:

1. Has the government used the information obtained in the national registration to compile statistics which will show, (a) the number of skilled man-hours of work which are available; (b) the extent to which these hours of work are being utilized; (c) the manner in which they are being utilized; (d) the number of unskilled man-hours of work available; (e) the manner in which and the extent to which they are being utilized; (f) the extent to which the unskilled labour is being trained?

2. If so, what statistics are available?

The answer brought down by the minister was "no", repeated seven times. Not only have they not used the information available; they have no statistics about anything. There is one thing to be said about that answer; it is frank; I assume that it is true, and there is no ambiguity about it. But it is an astonishing answer.

Mr. THORSON: It deals with the matter of man-hours.

Mr. HANSON: I understand that; I read what it meant—man-hours, based on a statistical review of the registration, and nothing has been done with respect to that. It asks what is the available man and woman power in this country, in terms of hours, and nothing has been done about it. To me that is just an astonishing situation.

At the same time that the mobilization act was passed the Department of National War Services was created and set up; and on August 27, 1940, the national war services

C273148

regulations were established. Later on they were consolidated and further amended and approved by order in council P.C. 1822 of March 18, 1941, and I think they have been further amended from time to time. As originally set up, the regulations provided for the military training of unmarried men within certain age groups for a period of only thirty days, which, as we all know, was later increased to four months. I shall refer only briefly to the reasons given at that time by the then chief of the general staff as to why the training was limited to only thirty days. Several reasons were given. The two important reasons were, first, that there was no equipment available for further training and, second, that the young men of Canada had to be taught a sense of their national obligation. The only observation I desire to make with respect to that is that to me it was a very strange reason to advance. I have made other observations in that connection, but I am not going to pause to repeat them to-day.

The set-up adopted in August, 1940, had to take into account the existing methods of military service in Canada, such as those furnished by the reserve militia units for the men and the training given at various institutions under the officers' training corps. I am assuming, without being a student of military matters, that the regulations as then set up were appropriate to the conditions as they existed then, qua the thirty-day training period. Men carried on the strength of the reserve militia units were considered as receiving the equivalent of thirty days of training at the different centres to which the age groups from twenty-one to twenty-four were to be called up.

Then came the extension of the war in practically every theatre and on almost every continent which, of course, as conditions in the Department of National Defence expanded and improved, led to the replacement of the thirty-day training plan by the four months plan, which, as everyone knows, was subsequently extended to training and service for the duration of the war, but within Canada. As I stated before, the national war services regulations, first established in 1940, have been amended on several occasions, in particular on February 24, 1941, as approved by order in council I think in March of the same year. The dates are not very important. They were amended to deal with the additional service required.

This is the first point I want to make to the minister, and I hope what I have to say will be constructive and will receive the attention of himself and his officers. It has been represented to me that many of the rules and regulations which were reasonable

at the time they were adopted in August, 1940, have no place under the existing system as it is now extended. The suggestion that is made to me in this connection is that many of these out-of-date regulations, if that is a proper term to apply to them, are now being used as loopholes which it is alleged encourage or enable persons to evade their responsibilities.

Mr. THORSON: I do not think that is true.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): That is the allegation that I get. In support of that allegation I received the other day a communication from a gentleman whose patriotism and knowledge of military affairs are of the highest order. He was a soldier in the last war; he comes from a family which is perhaps noted for its patriotism. He served, and I believe is still serving, as the head of the citizens' recruiting committee for military district No. 4, which is Montreal. Recently he wrote a letter to the *Montreal Star*, a copy of which I hold in my hand and which I have no doubt has been brought to the attention of the minister. In this letter he points out that at present there are no less than seven training centres in military district No. 4, and that at these camps the young trainees called out for service in Canada are urged from time to time to join one of the active service units of their own selection. We know that is so, and we have heard on several occasions in this house of some of the methods used to attain that objective, but it is not my intention to pursue that topic at the moment.

It is alleged that the esprit de corps and spirit of sacrifice among these trainees would be immeasurably strengthened if the Department of National War Services were to rescind all those portions of the 1940 regulations which permit a way out for dodgers and slackers.

This gentleman goes on to point out some of the most important weaknesses in the regulations, and I am going to deal with them seriatim. I am not doing it in any spirit of criticism. I think this may be helpful to the minister.

Mr. THORSON: I should like to assure the hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. Hanson) that any constructive suggestions which will make the regulations more workable, more adaptable, for the purposes for which they were framed will be cordially welcomed.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): So far so good—we are met on common ground. This is the first suggestion made.

1. That men of the trainee ages who were on the strength of a reserve unit on August 15,