

Supply—National Defence

from the time the original retirement took place to the time of re-enlistment? These are details we want to know and I think that before we pass this item we should be given this information.

Mr. Horner (Acadia): Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether we might have the attention of the minister while this debate is going on? It involves a great deal of money, about one-fifth of Canada's budget. Surely the minister could pay attention to what is being said.

An hon. Member: The hon. member is paying his monthly visit to the house, is he?

Mr. Lambert: These are the observations I wish to place on record at this time. We want answers to these questions. I have adverted to only a few. In other parts of the house, even on the minister's side of this chamber, further questions have been raised and I think we are entitled to answers. It is not good enough to say we should wait until these matters are discussed by the standing committee. That committee will be discussing the estimates for 1966-67. We are dealing now with a monumental reorganization of the forces based on the estimates before us and we should like answers to the questions which have been raised.

Mr. Nugent: Mr. Chairman, in rising to take part in this discussion I may say that I do not intend to take the time of the committee for very long. First, I wish to thank the Associate Minister for the prompt action he took with regard to a request I made to him. It has always seemed to me since the days when I spent some time in the army that the inflexibility of military regulations petrified the minds of the officers to such an extent that they were unable to give a common-sense interpretation of rules which affect service personnel, so sacrosanct were the regulations.

● (5:00 p.m.)

It was most encouraging to find that the Associate Minister's approach to the problem put common sense first and I can only wish that this will permeate the senior ranks of the army. I am quite aware that regulations must be strict and fairly strictly adhered to. But it is too often the case that regulations which are made to bring about certainty, to assist in bringing about regularity in handling affairs so that people will

[Mr. Lambert.]

know where they stand, which are of assistance in accomplishing the task that the military have before them, are used by the military not in the sense of an approach to the task but from the point of view of the sacredness of the regulations.

I always found when I was in the army, and I have discovered few instances since to change my attitude, that the military mind considers the book to be the most important thing. The regulation is all that counts and there is a mental block against trying to interpret a regulation in a human way and in a common-sense manner. I hope the example of the minister will have some effect on senior army personnel so that the minister himself will not have to be bothered with these questions which I understand come to him quite frequently.

I understand the Associate Minister always takes the same common-sense attitude when these questions come to him but it is discouraging to find that he is approached so frequently. When it comes to a question of when or how soon a man may be released, bending the regulations or interpreting them in a liberal manner so that they make common sense would make it unnecessary for the associate minister to be bothered with such matters. I hope the senior personnel in the armed forces, having observed that it is the wish of the government to put more heart or at least more common sense into the interpretation of regulations, will follow that course.

Hon. members and the public in general are perturbed about morale in the armed forces. Since the questions of recruitment and re-enlistment are providing us with a little problem I cannot help but feel that a common-sense and humane approach to personnel in the armed forces would be a most crucial factor in relieving the forces of some of their difficulty in getting recruits and keeping personnel who have been trained at such expense over such a long period of time.

In another area I have been bothered by one consideration for a long time. I refer to nuclear arms. It seems to me that the entire purpose of defence is to ensure the safety of this country and its citizens and that anything which will help us prevent war and keep us from getting into a conflict becomes our first line of defence so that none may perish in defence of our freedom. Therefore