

Supply—National Defence

• (8:00 p.m.)

Mr. Herridge: Would the minister inform us as to the role of honorary colonels in the new integrated armed forces?

Mr. Hellyer: The answer to that question, Mr. Chairman, is too involved and too detailed for discussion at this moment, but I would be glad to take it up with my hon. friend some afternoon over a cup of tea.

Mr. Bigg: Would the minister look into the whole matter of consolidation of pensions with respect to armed forces personnel? I studied this subject in great detail. There are many anomalies in the services. People who were in the armed forces during world war II do not have their service counted when it comes to a matter of consolidating with civil service pensions or R.C.M.P. pensions. The minister, as the man intimately involved in this whole problem, should examine it carefully.

The minister is having great difficulty keeping personnel in the armed forces. One of the reasons is that they are not clear how long they are going to be able to serve, and what type of pension consolidation they will have if they join the civil service or mounted police. They do not know this either with respect to broken service. Private business is calling young men away from the forces to fly commercial aircraft, to work in the technical electronics field, and to work as mechanics, and these young men should know what their position is with respect to pensions.

While he is at it the minister should look into the pensions of those who served 20 and 30 years in the armed service, going back as far as the South African war. Some of these people are living on pitiful pensions. Having served in the armed forces myself, I know that those who are still in the forces are worrying about whether or not they will get a square deal from the department. If this matter does not come entirely under the minister's purview then the Cabinet, Treasury Board and the Pension Commission should get together on it and see that no matter what branch of the armed services, or of the public service a man is in, he should get the same kind of deal as people serving in another branch. If we can give pensions backdated to the age of 9, 10, 11 and 12 years, then men who have served from the age of 21 until retirement should have a living income.

[Mr. Nielsen.]

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Chairman, I was trying to turn up the commitment which the minister made last night and I am satisfied my recollection is accurate that he said he would discuss these matters under vote 15 in committee. In the interval he has had the opportunity to refer to his experts, one of whom on his right I had the privilege of serving under in the air force. Surely these answers are available to him, in view of the fact that he has his officials before him.

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Chairman, I really do not think it is too helpful because there is such a wide variation of conditions that to start with just one or two figures would not be helpful. In view of the fact that the committee I was referring to, the standing committee, is going to be formed within a few days—I think the organization meeting is on Thursday and it will probably be starting its deliberations next week,—it could have full information on this subject and an opportunity could be provided to it to go into some considerable detail over the wide range of possibilities that would interest my hon. friend.

Mr. Nielsen: The minister made a very wide ranging speech last night. He went on for pages and pages in *Hansard*, dealing with the role of the CF-5. We are now on the vote that is going to authorize the expenditure of millions of dollars for an aircraft the role of which is in some doubt, the economics of which are in some doubt. The minister elaborated in some detail, but not sufficient in the view of many of us, on the role this aircraft would be playing in the defence fabric of the country. He stressed particularly the ground support role. It is my own view that this aircraft is unsuitable for a ground support role, and certainly this would appear to be the case according to the opinions of the experts I have read and spoken with.

The ground support role the minister was speaking of last night at such great length could at least be elaborated on this evening for members of the committee. I do not think we can simply gloss over it, in view of the millions of dollars to be spent on the aircraft. I believe it is only right that we, and the country at large, know precisely how this aircraft is going to be employed, and what justification the minister has, on the advice of his experts, for suggesting it is the most suitable aircraft to fulfil the role for which it is being purchased.

Mr. Hellyer: As I explained this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, the aircraft is an additional