

Mr. GREEN: Would it not be possible to fill up some units with men from their own province?

Mr. RALSTON: I would say it was possible to fill up some but that might depend upon the physical situation. If that is possible it would be done. But, generally speaking, it is not possible because, as I say, you have to have such an assortment.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): Is that true of officers, too?

Mr. RALSTON: You have to have men from all parts to form a complete infantry unit. But just as far as possible—and this may be regarded as a pious hope, although I assure my hon. friend it is more than that, and the adjutant general's hair is turning gray trying to carry it out as far as he can—we try to follow the principle of maintaining the territorial esprit de corps of the unit. I do say that.

I wish to mention this, also, that in this war it is becoming more and more a war of units rather than a war where territories are concerned. Take the air force, for instance. In the air force we find squadrons in which are men from British Columbia to Newfoundland. What counts for esprit de corps is the identity of the squadron rather than the territory from which the men come.

For instance, again, consider the old 51st, a division we all know, which was in the last war. It was an imperial division overseas.

Mr. GREEN: A Highland division.

Mr. RALSTON: There were a great variety of men in the 51st division. But it was the tradition of the division which counted. I think that we of the infantry—including my hon. friend and myself—thought more highly and sought to perpetuate more earnestly the local esprit de corps than did any other arm of the service.

We are trying to do that. The formation of the corps of infantry was the last step we had to take in that connection. And we stipulated in that connection what is not in force in writing in regard to any other corps, namely, that the principle of territorial affiliations should be regarded wherever possible and feasible.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): Would the minister indicate the position with regard to officers, in connection with the matter I raised the other night? Officers from the second battalion have gone into the reinforcement pool. In many instances we found that from the South Saskatchewan regiment they

went to the Regina Rifles, and the Regina Rifles officers in the second battalion went to the South Saskatchewan regiment.

Mr. RALSTON: That is not too bad.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): In many instances there has been a lot of bad feeling, because the second battalion has produced forty-six reinforcement officers, and most of them have been taken off to other units. In the meantime the first battalion are writing back and wanting to know why officers are not being sent out from the second battalion. The officers have been sent, but they have not got them.

Mr. RALSTON: The best I can do is to say to the hon. member that we are keeping before the authorities overseas the principle he has pointed out. I say without criticism of those overseas, because I think they have handled the situation as well as possible, that I do not think we have even had a complaint or an implied complaint by men who for the time being had gone to hospital from their own units, went back to reinforcement units, were sent to some other units, and could not get back again. There is a perpetual liaison maintained by units with the reinforcement group to see that their own men do not get away from them. It sounds easy to do this, but there is some difficulty in connection with it. All I can say is that we do keep that point before Canadian military headquarters, which really has charge of reinforcement units, in an endeavour to see, first that a man goes back to his own unit when he has been released on account of illness, or for some other reason and, second, that reinforcement officers come from the same locality. I would even hope with my hon. friend that, as far as it is practicable, reinforcement officers would come not only from the same locality but, if possible, from the second battalion of the same regiment. But I imagine there are those who would feel that if the Regina Rifles got reinforcements from the South Saskatchewan regiment, the Regina Rifles should feel fortunate, and the South Saskatchewan regiment should be satisfied. I can understand that it would be desired to draw an even finer line than that, particularly a unit like the South Saskatchewan, which has made such a name for itself.

However I shall certainly keep the matter before the authorities at headquarters.

Mr. CHURCH: Mr. Chairman, there is a great deal in the contention of the last two speakers with reference to men from the same district not being sent to units for reinforcements. In the last war the practice of having