

Reinforcements

has been passed extending the service of this number of men to the European theatres of operations.

This power will be used only to the extent necessary to make up the numbers of reinforcements required.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would just like to express my appreciation to my predecessor in office. He left me the most of his personal staff, without whose loyal aid I could not possibly have carried through the tasks and duties of these last three weeks. I am deeply obliged to him and to them for all that they have done to serve the public interest in this matter.

Mr. Speaker, I have taken the situation as I found it. I have tried with all my strength to work forward from there. I hope I am in some measure making some contribution to the purpose we all must serve—the effective support of our army overseas in the great task they still must do to discharge our just part in bringing the war in Europe to a successful conclusion, and to safeguard the peace which follows.

If we enter this new era united, we will be strong and we have all that is required to carry the happiness and welfare of our people to heights as yet undreamed.

Mr. GRAYDON: I take it that we are to be confined as much as possible to questioning the Minister of National Defence. Out of deference to a great Canadian I think I should indicate to Your Honour that I should make way for the hon. gentleman who represents the constituency of Prince in Prince Edward Island. I think this deference is due him in view of the importance of the matter and in view of the fact that at this time party lines and all divisions of opinion in the House of Commons are down. Therefore I am ready to give way to the hon. member for Prince.

Mr. RALSTON: There is quite a bit of information that General McNaughton could give, and it seemed to me that it might be regarded as bordering on the territory of security. As I have been listening to him it occurred to me that possibly the way to deal with any matters in connection with the information desired is, if there is to be a secret session or a hearing to deal with this matter, to decide there and then—

Mr. SPEAKER: Would the hon. member speak a little louder?

Mr. RALSTON: I am sorry. I have not yet made up my mind, but it occurred to me that possibly it might be more useful to the house and to the public if any information which is desired and which borders on the line

[Mr. McNaughton.]

of security could be elicited from General McNaughton with the galleries clear, and then such information as could be made public would be published.

I am obliged to my hon. friend for suggesting that I should be given the right of way; but I am not here as the public interrogator of this house. I am the humble member for Prince, and I know a little about the things about which General McNaughton has been talking. There is little difference between him and me. The only difference as I understand it, is that the general said there was a difference between us respecting policies. I think he rather attributed to me the policy of conscription for conscription's sake or conscription whether necessary or not. My policy has always been, and it has been frequently announced in this house, conscription when necessary, and I was following that policy when I made the recommendation I did which was not accepted by the government. I hope that the general will accept that correction, because there is no difference between him and me so far as the matter of policy is concerned. I understand his policy to be the same, that is to say, conscription when necessary.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): He has changed like the rest of them.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): You will have to eat crow like the rest.

Mr. RALSTON: I will have to ask the minister to **take the responsibility** for warning us if there is any matter of security connected with the questions I ask. There are only two or three questions that occur to me. I have not a copy of his statement. I found it a little difficult to hear him. I was interested in something that he did not give, but perhaps he will regard it as a matter of security. I refer to the size of the pools that he proposed to maintain in the Mediterranean area, in the northwest European area and in the United Kingdom; that is to say, the target which he sets as a pool which should be maintained there in the two battle areas directly behind the troops. Could he give us that information? He has given us numbers and has indicated that reinforcement pools are very necessary. Perhaps he could indicate the size of them in view of the fact that he has mentioned sixteen thousand altogether.

Mr. McNAUGHTON: In answer to that question I would say that it would not be possible to give the information requested in open session.