

National Defence Act Amendment

the R.O.T.P., men giving notice to leave the service after they have served their obligatory period. Perhaps this might be a good time to read into the record the exceptions in so far as the policy of permitting release after six months' notice is concerned.

Mr. McIntosh: Would the minister also refer to all services and tell us what happens to army commissioned officers and other ranks as well as navy commissioned officers and other ranks?

Mr. Hellyer: I understand the same policy applies to all the services. This statement is in response to an inquiry in respect of the voluntary release regulations and procedures. These are the exceptions to the six months' period of notice regulation for voluntary release. In these cases voluntary release will not normally be granted on six months' notice. I must again reiterate that this is policy, not something that is a matter of right or law.

The exceptions in respect of officers apply first to those obligated under Queens' regulations and orders 15.18, who have undertaken designed courses of over six months duration, R.O.T.P. medical and dental plan officers who are required to complete their period of obligation, and aircrew officers who are required to serve five years after completion of aircrew training, and R.O.T.P. aircrew officers required to fulfil the terms of their obligatory service.

The exceptions in respect of men apply first to men who are serving on a cycled ship, until the end of the cycle, men on fixed overseas unaccompanied tours such as in Cyprus with United Nations emergency force, and in Europe. These are six months or one year tours. Up to the present time, as far as can be determined, there have been no requests for release from officers who are serving on a cycled ship or who are on fixed overseas unaccompanied tours. If the problem arises the policy would presumably be the same as for men.

Second, I should add that compassionate or exceptional circumstances are accepted as reasons to release officers and men in the above categories. In other words, there may be circumstances so overwhelming that they would offset these exceptions. This would happen only in rare cases.

The current rules respecting release by purchase for all services are: (a) unless a man has urgent exceptional and compassionate reasons he is required to purchase his release if the request is made within three years of

commencing his first engagement; (b) release is allowed without cost beyond three years service and on six months' notice; (c) men in second or subsequent engagements are released on six months' notice, and Q.R. and O table (1) is not invoked. I might add that except as modified by those exceptions, the Queen's regulations and orders, 15.33, apply.

I think that completes the balance of the policy. Hon. members will now know just what it is that is presently in operation in so far as policy on release is concerned.

Mr. McIntosh: I should like to ask the minister whether he has given any consideration to the requests of members on this side of the house to withdraw the word "indefinite". Let me refer to the minutes of proceedings and evidence, volume 32, March 14. The following question was asked by one member of the committee:

Any fixed period; so that strictly speaking the "indefinite" is not really very important?

The judge advocate general then replied:

No, it is not materially increasing the powers of the governor in council. It is just making it a little tidier, and easier to draft the regulations, and so on.

In view of the fact there is so much objection to the inclusion of this term, and possibly we are overly suspicious in this regard as to what it may mean, perhaps the minister would consider our request to drop the word "indefinite".

Mr. Hellyer: We discussed this matter at some length before the lunch break. At that time I indicated that the defence staff thought it would be advisable to have legislative authority for either fixed or indefinite periods for the enrolment of men. This would give the staff the same flexibility they now have in respect of officers.

The minister's manpower study on men, which made this recommendation in the first place, I am told and believe is the most comprehensive examination of the terms of enrolment and employment of other ranks in the armed services that has ever been undertaken in this country. It not only included a study by senior officers who formed part of the group but also involved consultations with many other ranks in all parts of the country and overseas. It was only after this exhaustive study that this recommendation was made. I believe they are only asking parliament to provide this flexibility. I cannot guarantee that this authority will ever be exercised. As the judge advocate general said or