

The estimate has been made at approximately the same figure as last year. That is simply precautionary. It is quite true that production will be down, although my hon. friend will understand that a great many things which are produced in this fiscal year will be inspected in the next fiscal year. All I can say to my hon. friend is that it is simply for the purpose of making ample allowance for the board.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): Then there is a chance that the expenditure will be considerably less than this?

Mr. RALSTON: There is a chance that it may be less. Then the reason for the reduction in the estimate for internment operations and refugee camps is the fact that pay and allowances, amounting to something like \$3,000,000, for the camp staff are included this year under section A, army services, under the pay and allowances item, and the further fact that the number of civilian and Japanese internees is considerably reduced this year.

My hon. friend asked with regard to letters to soldiers in hospitals. I can tell him that the practice is not to retain letters in the unit when it is possible to find the address of the soldier. The committee will understand that the soldier may be wounded and evacuated either to a British hospital or perhaps eventually to a Canadian hospital. Returns are made from that hospital first to the second echelon and then back to the unit, and it takes some time for them to get to the unit. I do not know how long this boy was in hospital; but it may be quite possible that he would not get his mail until he came out, subject to this, that if the relatives had followed the instructions which are given in the casualty telegram which is sent out, and had marked the letters to the soldier "in hospital", the mail would not go to the unit but would go direct to the second echelon or to the records office, where it would be readdressed immediately to the hospital. In any event I can assure my hon. friend that it is not the practice to hold mail in the unit.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): In the case suggested yesterday by the Postmaster General some mail took ninety days to get to the soldiers in Italy. That mail would have left here before the casualty occurred, and the persons sending it could not be guided by the casualty telegram. What would happen to that mail; would it be held in the unit?

Mr. RALSTON: No. After the man has become a casualty the unit immediately forwards the mail to the second echelon, or at least to the central record office, where they would find out where the soldier is actually situated. The Postmaster General mentioned

[Mr. Ralston.]

ninety days, but he was illustrating the possibility of mail taking that long when it proceeded by slow convoy from here to the United Kingdom and from the United Kingdom to the Mediterranean. I would hope there were not very many cases of that kind.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): I believe that included parcels also.

Mr. RALSTON: That would be so in the case of parcels.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): Will the minister look into the matter further and see that there is no undue delay in having the mail forwarded to these boys?

Mr. RALSTON: I certainly will keep after it. Last night the Postmaster General mentioned that preference is given, as my hon. friend knows, to casualties in hospitals, but of course he was referring, as my hon. friend points out, to mail actually marked "in hospital"; otherwise it would go to the unit.

Mr. BLACK (Cumberland): I was informed by Colonel Underwood, who has the responsibility for overseas mail, that it is necessary for the service man when he is transferred from one camp to another to sign a card stating where his mail is to be forwarded; perhaps that had special reference to air force personnel. If that applies to the air force, however, I presume it would apply also to the army; and if a man fails to do that, the mail continues to pile up at his last designated address. It seems to me that the service, the air force or the army if this applies there, should assume responsibility with respect to every individual at a particular address, to see that the mail is forwarded to the new address. The members of the air force are not allowed to tell their families their new addresses; they are prohibited from giving the address of the station at which they are located, let alone giving any advance notice as to where they are to be transferred. According to my information the whole responsibility rests upon the individual service man to state where he is to be moved and where his mail is to be readdressed.

Mr. RALSTON: I shall leave my colleague the Minister of National Defence for Air to deal with the air force regulations, because I know nothing about them. As far as the army is concerned, as my hon. friend knows a man is entitled to give his relatives his new address, that is to say the name of the new unit to which he is going, so that that situation does not apply. Further than that, the postal corps attached to that unit will forward the mail if they find that the man has moved, so that the