

now overseas, some 10,000 of whom are to remain with the occupational force and the others return?

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): The amount asked for here is not to maintain the 25,000 men over there; it is to cover expenses incurred since the beginning of the fiscal year.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: I understand that. I have another question. You have a number of men who served in the far east, Burma and Asia. Are any of these men still in southeastern Asia, or where are they?

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): We did have three R.C.A.F. squadrons out there, but they have been withdrawn. A mission went to the east, and there were also personnel attached to the R.A.F.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: What is happening to those? Are they being brought back to England?

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): They have been coming back.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: Some have arrived probably within the last month from Burma and from India, because I happen to know some of them.

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): We had a coastal unit in Ceylon and two transport squadrons in Burma. They have been back for some time. There might be some ground administrative personnel left, but they are coming back now.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: About 15,000 are to be retained with the occupational force in Europe, the minister said, and the rest will be returned to Canada as soon as accommodation can be arranged for them. Is that it?

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): That is correct.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: One other question. Is any recognition contemplated in the form of a ribbon or other decoration for the men who served in the far east?

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): There is a Burma star, but I do not know what the qualifications are for it. It is awarded to the members of the forces that saw service in Burma, and I should think those squadrons that served in the east would be entitled to it.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: What is being done with the equipment of the squadrons overseas. They are supplied with Canadian equipment, are they not?

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): No; many of them have been supplied with R.A.F. uniforms.

We are replacing them with R.C.A.F. uniform, which is of a somewhat higher quality, before these men are demobilized.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: How about other equipment, such as station waggons, engine equipment, hospital equipment?

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): That is chiefly R.A.F. equipment for which we pay rental.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: What is being done with that?

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): Any aircraft or engines we are interested in retaining we crate and bring out to this country, at our expense; otherwise it is returned to the R.A.F., if rented; if owned, it is declared surplus and transferred to the R.A.F. for disposal.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: Not through Canadian War Assets Corporation?

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): Yes, as agents for Canadian War Assets Corporation.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: But through their office overseas?

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): Through their office overseas, yes.

Mr. PEARKES: May I ask the minister if the 10,000 men of the occupational force are in addition to the regular force of ten squadrons which are to be retained in Canada, because it is uncertain as to the time during which those occupational forces will be required there?

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): No; they are not in addition to the ten squadrons that will be retained in Canada. Some of the squadrons serving overseas will undoubtedly be disbanded on their return to Canada. They will not necessarily form part of the permanent force of this country.

Mr. PEARKES: If the 10,000 men are required for the occupational force for an extended period of years—we may look to that, perhaps, because the British army was on the Rhine for ten years after the last war—would the permanent force in Canada be reduced then to approximately 5,000?

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): I must say that we do not expect to have our occupational force there for such a considerable length of time as that, so that we have not been planning on that basis. I would hope that we would have them back within, possibly, the next year or two anyway.