

Concurrently with this change, it was proposed to increase the number of Canadian Divisions in the field from four to six.

I did not think that this proposal was warranted by our experience in the field, and I was quite certain that, owing to the severity of the losses suffered in modern battles, the manpower of Canada was not sufficient to meet the increased exposure to casualties consequent on the increased number of Canadian Divisions in the field.

I represented very strongly my views to the Minister, Overseas Military Forces of Canada, and, on further consideration, it was decided to drop this project, and to accept instead my counter-proposal, viz., to increase the establishment of the Canadian Infantry Battalion by 100 all ranks, to proceed with the reorganisation of the Engineer and Machine Gun Services, and to grant the various amendments suggested to establishments of other Arms and Branches.

I am glad to be able to say that my proposals regarding the reorganization of Engineer Services, Machine Guns, etc., as well as the increase in strength of the Infantry Battalions, received the favourable consideration and support of the Commander-in-Chief.

**Defences.**—It will be recalled that the ground held by the Canadian Corps throughout this period had been captured by the Canadians in the Battle of Vimy and subsequent actions, and held by them practically since its capture, except for a short interval during the Battle of Passchendaele. The area had been considerably improved during this time, and a very complete system of trench railways, roads, and water supply were in operation. Very comprehensive defences had been planned and partially executed.

Behind Vimy Ridge\* "lay the northern collieries of France and certain tactical features which cover our lateral communication. Here . . . little or no ground could be given up . . ." (See Sketch No. 2.)

A comparatively shallow advance beyond the Vimy Ridge would have stopped the operation of the collieries, paralysing the production of war material in France, as well as inflicting very severe hardship on the already sorely tried population. In conjunction with the shortage of shipping which practically forbade an increase in the importation of coal from England, the loss of the northern collieries might have definitely crippled

\*Extract from C.-in-C.'s Despatch, 8th July, 1918.

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