

recruited in Canada during the summer of 1918? My information is that after the Military Service Act came into force in this country a number of men who were fit subjects for conscription and who had not up to that time volunteered their services objected to serving with the Canadian Expeditionary Force and themselves suggested that they be permitted to form something in the nature of a foreign regiment, for service, I think, in the first instance in Poland or under the authority of the government of Poland. The regiment was to be a distinctly foreign regiment for service abroad, not under the authority of the Government of Canada. Upon examination of the question it was found that a good many of the men who desired to enlist in such a regiment were familiar with the Polish tongue and not very familiar with the English tongue, and it was thought that they might perform better service in a foreign battalion than they could in a Canadian battalion. At all events the matter was left to the decision of the men themselves. They were liable to conscription; their services could be required under the law of Canada for the Canadian Expeditionary Force. But they decided, with full knowledge of the circumstances, that they would prefer to serve as a Polish regiment apart altogether from the Canadian Expeditionary Force. In the summer or autumn of 1918, between 200 and 250 men were established as a Polish regiment, went away for foreign service, and, I believe, did not return to Canada until January of the present year. I do not know why they were so long delayed. I must say that my hon. friend from South Renfrew was indefatigable in his efforts to have these men returned to Canada at a much earlier date, and perhaps his efforts very much hastened their return. The hon. gentleman has also been most insistent in his demand that these men be treated as members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force for all purposes. I have had occasion to point out to him that under the present law this cannot be done—whether or not it should be done is a matter for the House. Our law applies only to members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force so far as pay, discharge gratuities and the like are concerned. These men have not been badly treated so far as we are concerned; if they have any reason to complain it is against their own government or against foreign governments. They deliberately made the choice, with a full knowledge of the facts. The authorities in this country endeavoured in every way to persuade them to enlist with the Canadian Expeditionary

Force, because at that time we were very hard pressed for men. It was only at their express desire that they were permitted to form something like a foreign legion.

Now, when the armistice was signed the Government passed an Order in Council to provide for the payment of war service gratuity, but that order was expressly limited to the naval and land forces of Canada on active service. The first order was passed on December 21, 1918. A subsequent order was passed on December 1, 1919, making the provisions of the first order apply to those who had been demobilized or discharged prior to the armistice; but that second order likewise was expressly limited to pay and gratuity to members of His Majesty's forces. The men for whom my hon. friend from South Renfrew pleads were at no time members of His Majesty's forces, at no time part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. It was only to such forces that gratuity could be paid under the provisions of the Orders in Council to which I have referred. I do not agree that there has been any wrongful treatment, any harsh or ill-treatment of these men. However, the matter is a fair one for discussion in the House and I shall have no objection at all to whatever view the House may take in regard to it.

Hon. RODOLPHE LEMIEUX (Maison-neuve—Gaspé): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the enthusiasm which prevailed when the soldiers left Canada to fight for a common cause should not diminish as we get far away from the events of those days. The Poles in Canada fought the same enemy as our own soldiers fought; they enlisted bravely and did their duty heroically. It matters not whether they served under the British flag, the French flag or the Polish flag; they left Canada to fight for the common cause, and with the sanction of the Department of Militia; for no soldier could leave Canada to fight in a foreign legion, if liable for military service, without the express authorization of the department. As has been stated by my good friend the Minister of Militia (Mr. Guthrie) many of the Poles in the county of Renfrew could not speak or understand the English language; they preferred to serve under a general who is now famous throughout the world, General Haller, who organized the Polish legions serving jointly with the French troops.

Now, the question for us is whether these men are entitled to the same treatment as our own troops. Mr. Speaker, I do not