

in addition, many thousands of volunteers in training in the army in Canada. Every day draftees are volunteering for overseas service. We believe their number can be increased by emphasizing anew the need and the opportunity for overseas service.

We had to ask ourselves one other question: How many additional men would be immediately available if compulsion were resorted to in order to send draftees overseas? I have told you that the present effective total of draftees in the army is under 60,000. Of that number only about 42,000 are considered suitable material for infantry reinforcements. Some 16,000 of these men are trained as infantry. It is estimated that about 8,000 of them are sufficiently trained so that they could be ready for combat at an early date.

Without any compulsion or any intensification of present methods a considerable number of these draftees would volunteer. We believe many more can be secured by a special appeal. The actual difference in numbers secured by the two methods might be very small indeed. The voluntary system has not broken down. At the moment, it is subject to an added strain which calls for an intensified effort at home, in the period immediately ahead, particularly to provide personnel in an advanced stage of training.

How great the difficulties would be in substituting conscription for overseas service for the voluntary system no one knows. But everyone who is honest with himself knows that there would be genuine difficulties and that they might be very grave. Instead, we are redoubling our efforts to meet the existing situation by the voluntary method. In these efforts, I appeal for the patriotic co-operation of all Canadians.

Many of you will ask why, if they are not to be sent overseas, the draftees are not disbanded? There are several reasons. One is that ever since early in 1942 draftees have been enlisting and going overseas in thousands. Many more are trained, and will wish to volunteer for service overseas now that it is clear that the need for "home defence" has passed. Another reason is that while the war is not yet advanced to the stage where the government can announce a detailed plan of demobilization, it has been decided to follow the principle that those men who have given the longest and the hardest service will be given the first opportunity of demobilization. Obviously that means a first preference in discharge and in employment opportunities for those with overseas service.

But this does not mean that draftees will be maintained in idleness. As long as we have an army overseas, Canada remains the ultimate base of its operations. We must maintain a considerable military establishment for the training of reinforcements, the provision of supply and certain other non-operational duties.