

After Recess

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. COLDWELL: Can the Minister of National Defence tell us what are the medical categories of the men in the home defence army, how many are in each category, and what categories are considered to be fit for duty in the line?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: I was not able to catch the question in full, but I understand the hon. gentleman to be asking for a breakdown of the N.R.M.A. men by categories. The total strength of the N.R.M.A. as of September 27, the latest figure I have with me, was 68,489, of whom 8,743 were on extended leave, which leaves actually in the service 59,746. Of that number approximately 16,000 were trained as infantry and another 26,000 were of an age and category suitable for infantry training. So that the total potential infantry in the N.R.M.A. is the sum of 16,000 and 26,000, or 42,000. The remainder, namely some 17,746, are considered to be unsuitable and unavailable for infantry.

Mr. COLDWELL: And is the lowest category B-2? What will be the lowest category accepted as fit for infantry service in the line?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: We do the categories on what is known as the pulhems system. With the exception of a few tradesmen the minimum pulhems categories acceptable for infantry for service in the line are 1-1-1 and 2-2-2-1.

Mr. COLDWELL: What does that mean, precisely?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: The pulhems categorization is a most carefully worked out system with the introduction of which our own medical officers, both here in Canada and overseas, had a great deal to do. It breaks the estimation of a man's fitness down into all parts of the body; for instance, "P" is physical; "U" is upper body; "L" is the lower part of the body, and so on. Unfortunately I have not with me at the moment the rather thick pamphlet giving all the details, but I have sent for it and it will be here in a few moments.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: There is one question I should like to ask in connection with the number of voluntary enlistments and the discharges in each of the months beginning with last June. I ask for this information because in a return brought down some months ago, just before the house adjourned, it was stated that the excess of voluntary enlistments over discharges was some 5,400 during the months of March, April and May.

So that I would like the minister to give the house a statement setting out the number who volunteered in each of the months from June to October, and the number of discharges in each of those months.

Mr. McNAUGHTON: I have under my hand the figures for January, 1944, to September, 1944, by months which I would be very glad to give.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Would you give them from June, 1944, to the end? We have had the other figures. What I wish to get is the figure for the last three or four months starting with June.

Mr. McNAUGHTON: The total enlistments for general service in June were 6,282; July, 4,860; August, 5,256; September, 5,318; October, 4,710. That is the last figure I have. We have not November.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Would you give the discharges for each of the corresponding months?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: I have been able to give the enlistments in terms of precise figures. We have to give the discharges in round figures with the data I have available here. In June there were 4,000 discharges; in July, 3,400; in August, 3,500, and in September, 3,000. The figures I have here were rounded off for another purpose.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Have you October?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: I have not October. I shall be very happy to get it for you if you would ask again.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: I should like to ask you whether in your opinion, or whether you so advised the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King), that you believed or had reason to believe that you could secure a very large increase in enlistments among the N.R.M.A. troops? When was such a suggestion first made to the Prime Minister?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: The answer that I would make to the hon. member is that if I had not believed that the measures which were open to me to take that persuasion would yield the results I would not have made that suggestion.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: When was the suggestion made? When did the minister first let the Prime Minister know that he believed that he could make the voluntary system supply the necessary reinforcements for the Canadian infantry? When was the first time you gave the Prime Minister that opinion?