

*The War—Hong Kong*

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Oh, you can never leave the Prime Minister out!

Motion agreed to.

(For Mr. Churchill's address, with introduction by Mr. Mackenzie King, see page 4478)

## THE WAR

CANADIAN REGIMENTS AT HONG KONG—  
STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF NATIONAL  
DEFENCE

On the orders of the day:

Hon. J. L. RALSTON (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, since the house adjourned the name of Hong Kong has been added to the battle honours of two fine Canadian regiments, and these regiments, by the heroism of the brave men who comprised them, have added to our history an unforgettable page of gallantry and devotion.

I feel that this house should not and would not wish to prorogue without recording a tribute to these regiments and these men and without receiving a statement regarding the expedition.

I share deeply the anxiety which is felt not only in the homes directly affected, but in all Canada, in these days of waiting for news. I want to assure the house that no effort which we could or can make to get information has been or will be spared. We have sought to take advantage of every possible avenue of communication and will continue to do so.

We have recently received word that the Japanese have established a prisoners of war bureau and that they are ready to exchange information through the International Red Cross. Immediately on receipt of this word, it was suggested to the Red Cross people in London that their representative in Tokyo be requested to communicate direct with the International Red Cross representative in Canada. It is earnestly hoped that this suggestion will be accepted. If it is, it may hasten considerably the receipt of this information.

I shall now deal, first, with the manner in which a Canadian expeditionary force to Hong Kong was decided upon; second, the selection of the two regiments which were sent; third, the preparation of this force; fourth, its equipment and transportation; and fifth, its heroic operations at Hong Kong as far as we have received reports.

1. Decision to send Canadian force. On September 19, 1941, the government received a message from the government of the United Kingdom, asking us to furnish, as they said, one or two battalions to strengthen the garrison of Hong Kong.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

Before arriving at a decision to agree to this request, the various strategical factors involved were fully considered. The British government, as a precautionary measure, had determined to strengthen its forces at Hong Kong and Singapore. Australia provided a portion of the additional troops required at Singapore, and Canada was being asked to supply a part of those required for Hong Kong. The British government indicated at the time that reinforcement by one or two battalions from Canada would mean an increase in the strength of the garrison much greater in proportion than the number of men that would be involved.

It was felt that such reinforcements would have a good moral effect in the whole of the far east, would give fresh evidence of commonwealth solidarity, and would reassure the Chinese as to the British intention to hold the island. In addition, the Canadian troops would materially increase the defensive strength of the garrison.

It was considered to be incumbent upon Canada, if at all possible, to accept this share of the responsibility for strengthening the garrisons in the Pacific area. After due consideration of all the factors, and on the recommendation of our military authorities who had studied the subject, the government authorized for dispatch to Hong Kong a Canadian force composed substantially of two infantry battalions.

This decision was reached on 29th September and was telegraphed to London on the same date. On 1st October we received a reply from London expressing appreciation and stating that a further message, dealing with military arrangements, would follow. This further message was received here on 9th October. On the 11th October the war office inquired as to whether, in addition to the two battalions, a modified brigade headquarters could be supplied. These proposals were agreed to.

2. Composition of the Canadian force. The force as finally determined thus consisted of a headquarters, containing various signal and administrative personnel, and two infantry battalions. Brigadier J. K. Lawson, an experienced officer who had been Director of Military Training at National Defence headquarters, and who had seen extensive service in the last war, was selected to command the force. Colonel Patrick Hennessy, D.S.O., M.C., another experienced officer who had been Director of Organization at National Defence headquarters and who also had served throughout the last war, was appointed as Senior Administrative Officer.

The selection of the two battalions to compose the force was a matter carefully studied