

*War Appropriation—Army*

overseas. We also have 68,000 home defence men. Surely there is an approximate total to be reached for home defence men, after which we shall require no more, because under present policy they cannot be sent overseas.

Mr. RALSTON: But I do not think I can make that estimate to-night. As I say, it just depends upon the rate of enlistments. I do not think this is a time when one can make an estimate and say we shall come to the end of home defence men at a certain time. It will depend upon the enlistments and the number of men required for overseas and in Canada.

Mr. GREEN: Then the minister cannot give any approximate figure?

Mr. RALSTON: No; I cannot.

Mr. GREEN: I have another question. The units of the Canadian army were raised on a territorial basis; that is, there were certain battalions from Ottawa, certain battalions from Toronto, certain battalions from Vancouver, and so on. The first reinforcements that went overseas also came from these respective cities; that is, the reinforcements for these units. Now it would appear that the territorial system of building up and reinforcing our units has completely broken down. That is, over half an Ottawa battalion may now come from Toronto, or from Winnipeg, or from other parts of Canada. The same is true in regard to reinforcements; that battalion may be reinforced with men from many different parts of the country. I should like to know whether that is true overseas and also whether it is true in Canada. I believe that in fact it is much worse in Canada; that in some instances the units are only names as far as the territory is concerned; that is to say, that a Vancouver battalion is now practically full of men coming from all over Canada and has practically no men from its home city. Will the minister tell us whether or not that is correct and, if so, whether there is not some way in which that situation may be overcome, because it does mean so much to have the men from the various towns and provinces kept together? It improves their morale; they understand each other better. In the last war we were all very proud to be in a British Columbia battalion, for example; I know the minister was equally proud to be with a Nova Scotia battalion. That system seems to have broken down completely in this war, and I think it is most unfortunate. I would ask the minister to make a statement in regard to that situation.

[Mr. Green.]

Mr. RALSTON: I yield to no one in my desire to maintain what I might call the community spirit just as far as possible, but I would remind the hon. member—if he did not have the experience, I did—that we got men from a good many parts of Canada in the Nova Scotia battalions, and we welcomed them. I am sure the British Columbia battalions did exactly the same thing. As my hon. friend probably knows, we had to break up a number of Nova Scotia battalions in order to provide reinforcements, and I think in my own battalion we had a great many men from Saskatchewan as well. There is not the same opportunity in this war, in the first place owing to the kind of war it is, to maintain reinforcements from the territorial locality from which the battalion comes. As my hon. friend knows, there are many more tradesmen in units to-day, and you cannot get tradesmen the way you could get infantrymen in the last war. By "tradesmen" I mean also men with specialist weapons, because when in a battalion you get not only the rifle, the hand grenade and the Lewis gun but, in addition, the two-inch mortar, the three-inch mortar, a carrier, a Boys anti-tank gun and several other specialist weapons; you have an entirely different situation, and you cannot get as easily the full number of suitable men from the same locality. About six or nine months ago, realizing that it was necessary to get men in order to supply the need for specialists and tradesmen, we got certain men from localities other than those in which the battalion was organized. And realizing, too, that from some localities more battalions, in proportion to their population, had gone overseas than perhaps they could support, with respect to reinforcements, we formed the corps of infantry. I have not the order in council here to-night; but the effect of it was that infantry was made a corps, just as gunners are made a corps, just as the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps is made a corps, and just as ordnance is made a corps. We did have the proviso in that, as far as possible, men should be reinforced from the territorial localities from which the battalions originally came. We are endeavouring to carry it out so far as possible. In the battalions in Canada, of course, as men are withdrawn to go overseas to fill up the reinforcement pool, they have to be put in where we can get them. If we cannot get them from the particular locality from which they come, we have to get them somewhere else, in order that the battalion may be filled up.