

advised him of the shortage. Well, the persons at fault are the officers who had to do with sending forward the reinforcements. The situation is rather confused by the possibility of a shortage of reinforcements despatched from "an eastern seaboard town", as the press term the port of embarkation, or a shortage of reinforcements in our pools in England or at the front. Probably these three shortages should be all combined. But as a matter of fact the Minister of National Defence could not rely upon the reports he was receiving, and he had to fly over to Europe to discuss the matter with the officers commanding units at the front in order to get the true story. He came back with the story they had told him, which was the story already in the possession of our people. One young man I know, who is in command of a battalion overseas, wrote to his father nearly three months ago pointing out that his battalion had shrunk from four companies to three, and the companies instead of being 110 strong were down to 50 men. That is a very serious state of affairs, because the shortage would run through the technical sections in the same proportion. The public knew all about this critical condition—in fact knew more about it than apparently the Minister knew; they were getting information direct from their boys overseas. I repeat, it is a serious matter that the officers whose duty it was to keep the Minister informed, left him ignorant of the actual conditions, and he had to go over to the front and see for himself, something which should have been wholly unnecessary.

Hon. Mr. KING: I think my honourable friend ought to clarify that statement, because when he returned Colonel Ralston reported to the Government that there were sufficient reinforcements in our pools in England and in Italy to take care of the situation until December. My honourable friend ought not to rely on letters as his source of information. Letters may mean something or nothing.

Hon. Mr. GRIESBACH: From the beginning my information has been better than the Government's.

Hon. Mr. KING: You read letters.

Hon. Mr. GRIESBACH: There has been a shortage of replacements for three months, and there is to-day.

Hon. Mr. KING: That was not Colonel Ralston's report to the Government when he returned from the front.

Hon. Mr. GRIESBACH: I know that. I am telling you what my information is, and I say I find it more reliable than the Government's information.

Hon. Mr. KING: I would not say that.

Hon. Mr. GRIESBACH: I do say it. I say the Minister was misled—

Hon. Mr. KING: I am sorry to hear you say that.

Hon. Mr. GRIESBACH: —by his officers, who did not give the facts, and this accounts for the Prime Minister saying, "I was taken by surprise." The information contained in letters from the soldiers overseas to their relatives at home is more reliable than the official information. Those men are right on the ground, they are holding the front. That matter of misinformation should be looked into.

The decision arrived at and embodied in the Order in Council is to dispatch 16,000 N.R.M.A. men as overseas reinforcements. I have already said that there is now and has been for some time a shortage of reinforcements, and therefore these 16,000 men should be dispatched immediately. But knowing those men as well as I do, I express the fears of many other officers who also know them well, that if you give them embarkation leave you will see scarcely any of them again. Indeed, it is just on the cards that three months hence the Government will meet Parliament and say, "Well, we ordered these men to be dispatched; but they have not gone; they are not under control." When a body of young men march down the streets, destroy the Union Jack and make speeches against the Government, that is a political demonstration and the Government must deal with it politically. But when you have men in uniform carrying arms, marching through the streets of any town and defying the Government, that is mutiny. I notice the papers have shied away from the use of that word. But such conduct is mutiny, and it means that the men are not under control. Any Government that abdicates its responsibility and its duty to maintain discipline in the armed forces in time of war is in a bad way. These men have got to be dealt with. As I say, if you give them embarkation leave you will never see them again; as they go through Eastern Canada they will all disappear into the bush. It is quite on the cards that these 16,000 draftees will never reach the port of embarkation. Some may tell me, "Oh, that can be arranged and provided against." It has not been so far. I can tell from the wording of the dispatches that the thing is being rigged right now. We are told already that six battalions stationed in British Columbia have left for Quebec. Those men are going home, and naturally they will give no trouble. They will trouble the Government later. I am of opinion as one of the