

*War Appropriation*

I am not going to ask the minister to give them. He has stated to-night that according to a formula which has been set down—I think I heard him say by a war office corps commander—a certain quota for reinforcements for England, for the fighting forces, had been established and was being lived up to. That is reassuring, but I should like to know whether that quota is based on peace-time activity or war-time activity. That is the vital point which we should know. The minister knows that from 20 to 50 per cent of an army may be wiped out in a single action.

Mr. RALSTON: Oh, no, not an army.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Well, a corps.

Mr. RALSTON: Oh, no.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Or a division, then, may be wiped out in a single action. The casualties may be very large. I should like to know whether the quota which the minister says has been established is anything like the quota which was in existence in 1918. As I understand the history of that war, we had 100,000 men in the active army on the field in France. We had 100,000 in reserve in the rear and 100,000 men in England as reinforcements. Have we anything like that position to-day? That is the gist of the question which I ask the minister for the purpose of getting information—and I will invite him to go as far as he can without divulging what he may consider a military secret, because if I have asked too much I drop the question immediately. I want him to understand that my question is not for the purpose of causing embarrassment but in order to have a reassurance. The question is this: Is the quota of reinforcement personnel in England, in connection with these holding units, based on peace-time wastage or on anticipated war wastage? If it is based on peace-time wastage, I have no doubt it would be ample; but my anxiety is this: If the Canadian corps goes into action in 1942—and it is quite possible it will go into action in 1942—have we personnel in England, trained men, in sufficient numbers to take care of probable battle wastage?

I want to know first if the quota is based on a peace-time position or on probable wastage after the Canadian corps has been in action. I have some grave doubts, but I do not know; I am asking for information. I say frankly, if the minister cannot give me that information publicly, do not give it, for I do not want to embarrass the

[Mr. R. B. Hanson.]

authorities. But I think the people of Canada and the people who have sons and husbands overseas would like to have some assurance from the minister that the quota is ample for reinforcements in case there are battle casualties.

Mr. RALSTON: I want to express my appreciation of my hon. friend's approach to the matter; I accept what he says 100 per cent, and I want to go just as far as I can. I have no reservations to make in my mind, but I have reservations to make as to numbers. I know nothing about the number required at any one time; I know the quota is based on such and such a percentage for infantry, such and such a percentage for artillery, and such and such percentages for different arms of the service. That is, experience shows that there are different rates of casualties for different arms of the service. I have just noted here a formula which I think is correct. This is not any cut-and-dried formula, but is based on an approximation by those who, I believe, are competent, the best approximation they can make of what would likely be needed under conditions which can reasonably be anticipated.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Does that mean battle conditions?

Mr. RALSTON: Whatever conditions they anticipate; I presume that they took into account the possibilities and probabilities, and that that quota is ample for the purpose. I am talking about those overseas.

In addition, my hon. friend will understand that, as I mentioned the other night, we have in training centres in Canada active reinforcements of over 40,000 as well. I cannot go further than that, but I can tell my hon. friend that the quota and the basis on which it is figured are made by people whom I believe to be competent, in whom I have confidence, and that is the quota we are endeavouring to live up to. I have here the figures of those who have gone over, and they are somewhat in excess of the actual figures laid down. But that is nothing one way or the other because it is an arbitrary figure.

My hon. friend mentioned the last war. It is difficult to make comparisons, but I looked up some figures and I find that at the end of the war, November, 1918, there were in France 153,431; reinforcements, 12,214, and reinforcements immediately available in England, 3,323, or practically 10 per cent immediately available. But there were potential reinforcements in France in considerably larger numbers; I have not the figure before me.