

War Appropriation—Army

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): Does the women's army undergo the same check?

Mr. RALSTON: The intention is that they will be checked in the same way as the men.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): Is it the intention of the department to give all the men overseas the Wassermann test? The reason why I ask is this. I notice that some writers in Great Britain have been expressing considerable alarm over the serious increase in venereal disease in Great Britain. Therefore I think it is important to know whether the department is planning to examine all the men now stationed in Great Britain. Can the minister also give us the number of men who have been discharged from the army on account of v.d.s. or v.d.g., and the number of men who have been treated and retained in the service as cured?

Mr. RALSTON: I am informed by the director-general of medical services that no instructions have been given overseas for giving everybody over there the Wassermann test; that is, men who have been in the army. The check is planned to be made upon reexamination or upon hospitalization. Hon. members will see that men who have been over there for a good while and are in healthy condition are not in quite the same position as the men in Canada. As a matter of fact, this whole movement, as my hon. friend knows, is not as active in the United Kingdom, even among the civilian authorities, as it is in Canada.

As to the number discharged, in a return to an order of the house dated March 24, 1943, order No. 41, it was asked: "How many have been discharged from all branches of the active service overseas up to December 1, 1942?" The answer was, "7,722." "What percentage of these were discharged because they were suffering from syphilis?" The answer was ".725 per cent, a total of 56 cases." Then, question No. 5, "How many of the armed forces serving in Canada only were discharged up to December 1, 1942?" Answer, "71,488." "What percentage of these were discharged because of syphilis?" Answer, ".505 per cent, or a total of 361 cases."

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): The minister was to give me the figures of how many men have been treated and cured.

Mr. RALSTON: We have not them right here. The director-general of medical services is endeavouring to see if he can get them.

[Mr. Ralston.]

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): It seems to me that some consideration ought to be given to the advisability of making the Wassermann test universal for Canadian troops now stationed in Great Britain. One of the British medical authorities made the statement in a periodical a few weeks ago that venereal disease in Great Britain had increased about forty per cent and that there was a great deal of alarm on that account. I would think that for the protection of the Canadian troops there should be periodic examinations. I know the laboratory facilities required would be very large, but it would seem to be possible to take men by units, by brigades or divisions, and have at least an annual Wassermann test for the protection of these men in order that proper treatment might be given before the infection had done serious damage.

Mr. RALSTON: I have made a note of what my hon. friend has said, and I will discuss it with the director-general of medical services. He tells me there is a periodic examination, but it is not a periodic Wassermann test, which of course is what my hon. friend is talking about.

Mr. McCANN: Is it the intention of the army medical authorities to have a blood-reaction test on discharge from the army or on demobilization? It would be a protection to the individual himself and also to the civil population, and it might provide information worth while in the event of a man being discharged and being a potential pensioner.

Mr. RALSTON: I have made a note also of that. The matter of a test on discharge as distinguished from a test during service has not been determined upon, but I will discuss it with the director-general of medical services.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): Across Canada we have a number of wartime housing staff houses. Some of these have cost a great deal of money, and some at the present time are losing money. The staff house at Peterborough has about ninety men in it at the present time, and I understand the loss on these premises alone is over \$5,000 a month. Has the minister considered using these staff houses for hospitals for the armed forces? They are extremely adaptable for that purpose, and could be turned into suitable hospitals at very little cost.