

It is now the time to review the past, and to formulate our plans for the future in such a way as to convince the country that they are founded on sound sense. A sound plan now may save us many anxious moments in the future.

Having experienced a period immediately after the last war when the permanent force was authorized for an establishment of 10,000, I remember vividly how the units of that then permanent force never attained anything like the numbers they were authorized to have. As the years went by they were reduced to the merest skeleton. The result was that at the commencement of this war the permanent force consisted of little more than 4,000 men, the majority of whom were employed in instructional and administrative duties.

The proposal for the permanent force of the future is for from 20,000 to 25,000. Care will have to be exercised to see that the units of that establishment are not allowed to become the skeletons which the old permanent force became, and that it should not be allowed in that way to become a force incapable of carrying out the functions for which the minister has detailed it.

As I said earlier, the country is now extending a welcome home to its returning men. In the excitement of the moment, are we to forget the Canadian occupational force which must remain in Germany? While the minister mentioned that occupational force, he said very little about it. The first announcement as to its objects and duties was made by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) in the last session when, on April 4, as reported at page 446 of *Hansard* he said:

In Europe it is necessary not only to secure complete victory, but that achievement must be confirmed, and the continued maintenance of peace assured. Where needed, after the cessation of military operations, the inter-allied army will continue in occupation of Germany. The size of this force has been set to give continuing assurance that Germany will not be able to resist or evade the settlement which will be imposed on her.

The burden of maintaining this force will be shared among the allies and all will be appropriately represented.

He goes on to say:

The quota which Canada has undertaken to maintain is modest having regard to our resources and to our direct interest in the maintaining and safeguarding of the peace of the world.

Elsewhere he mentioned that that force would consist of approximately 25,000 men. The retention of that force in Germany is an obligation which Canada has assumed and she cannot shirk her responsibilities. Among the tasks which that force has to perform may be

[Mr. Pearkes.]

included the disarmament of the enemy, a particularly difficult and lengthy operation; the distribution of food and the reestablishment of law and order. The work to be done to restore health and to bring back the starving to life must also be carried out under the protection of that occupational force.

It is difficult to visualize the tremendous responsibilities which lie ahead of it. It is well to recall that after the last war Great Britain contributed her share in the occupying of the frontier zone for a period of ten years. I suggest that there are pointers which would lead one to believe that a more extended period, in both time and space, may well follow the conclusion of this war. The difficulties under which our occupational force is operating cannot be overestimated. It is surrounded by a hostile and still arrogant population, a people who have none of the luxuries and few of the necessities of life, whose cities have been destroyed and who must face the severe winter of central Europe without adequate stocks of food or fuel. Everything that our soldiers have—mind you, many of the essentials for them are also in short supply—will be looked upon with covetous eyes by the civilian population. Our men will be surrounded by temptation. In consequence, strict discipline will have to be maintained just at a time when many would hope that restrictions might be relaxed.

I have the greatest sympathy for General Vokes and for every man who is serving under him in that occupational force. Only last week Field Marshal Montgomery, when accepting the freedom of the city of Londonderry in Ireland, said that his great fear was that disease would sweep Europe, killing millions. Our soldiers are exposed to that danger.

Our Canadian occupational force is far from being a happy one. Few of its members are there of their own free will. Of the 21,000 who now compose the force, some 11,000 to 12,000 are general service men who expressed no desire to serve in the force when they were given an opportunity of saying how they would like to continue serving after V-E day. Some 4,622 have seen more than six months actual combat service, and 1,700 are N.R.M.A. soldiers who have been ordered overseas against their wishes.

This committee must agree that it is undesirable and unfair to leave any man in that force for an extended period and that those who have already borne the brunt of their share of fighting before V-E day should be replaced without delay. No doubt a certain number of replacements are available among low-point men who are now in England, but