

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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The Prime Minister

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Subject

No Compulsion As Yet

In his address last night Premier King reminded the country that the draftees are not an unmoving pool of trained men, but a constantly changing reservoir from which the active army is continually being fed enlistments, and which, in turn, is itself being fed by new call-ups. From this reservoir of draftees the army has received 43,000 men, the navy and air force 6,000. Apart from men on leave, etc., the present draftee strength is 59,000. Of these, only 42,000 are suitable for infantry service, which is the one service requiring reinforcements, and of the 42,000 only 16,000 have been trained as infantrymen. Of the 16,000, only 8,000 have sufficient training for combat duty.

That these or some other reinforcements are soon to be required by the infantry overseas, Mr. King made quite clear. He said: "Infantry reinforcements have been adequate to meet the requirements to date." But he admitted "a possible shortage in the next few months." He declared that the highest military advisers of the government are satisfied that the reinforcements so far utilized have been well trained. "A few may have failed to receive all the training required," but "the number of these exceptional cases is exceedingly small." Some have been remustered from other services for infantry reinforcements, but all these have had basic infantry training and also training in their particular arm. In addition, "they are given further special infantry training before being sent into combat."

That, then, is the situation as Mr. King sees it, and he is not prepared, for the present, to send the draftees overseas; nor does he think they should be discharged into civilian life, for the time may come when they will have to be used, and their discharge would fill positions which should be available to the active services. The Prime Minister thinks that the utilization of the draftees at present would incur a grave situation at home, and he is therefore adopting the course advised by General McNaughton—a new appeal to draftees to join the active infantry voluntarily in greater numbers, and a culling out or remustering of active servicemen for service at the front.

It should not be long before the success or failure of this plan is demonstrated. If it succeeds, Canada will be saved the grave situation which Mr. King foresees if compulsory service for overseas is inaugurated. But if the plan adopted by the government is not a success, the draftees will have to be used.

While emphasizing the disturbance at home, and in the army itself, which would result from the incorporation of draftees in the volunteer forces, Mr. King said: "That is nevertheless a risk the government would have to take, if it were necessary to enable Canada to bear her just share of the load in the winning of the war."