

## Progress of Demobilisation.

### Statement by Shipping Controller and Government Representatives.

The attention of the Shipping Controller having been called to statements in the Press with reference to the delays which occurred during February in the repatriation of Canadian troops, he states that these delays were due to circumstances over which the Ministry of Shipping had no control, some hundreds of vessels being held up in the ports for several weeks awaiting repairs and refit, owing to labour disputes, to the serious prejudice not only of the repatriation of Imperial and Dominion troops, but also of the country's food supplies.

The majority of these disputes having now been settled, the Shipping Controller is hopeful not only that the normal rate of repatriation may be resumed, but that some substantial part of the arrears may be made good in the near future. He also thinks it desirable to correct the suggestion which has been made that the British Government is giving to the Americans facilities for repatriation which it is withholding from the Dominion troops. The facts are that Canadian repatriation has consistently been given the first claim on all suitable shipping in the North Atlantic which, under normal conditions, is sufficient to provide for the conveyance of considerably more troops than the Canadian authorities require. After the allotment of the ships to carry Canadians, the balance of shipping available, when Imperial needs have been met, is placed at the disposal of the American authorities for repatriation of their troops.

#### First Claim on North Atlantic Shipping.

In the House of Commons last month, Viscount Wolmer, M.P. for Aldershot, asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Shipping Controller whether American troops are still being repatriated in British ships, and, if so, whether he was aware of the complaints by Canadian soldiers that insufficient shipping has been allotted for their return to Canada, with consequent rioting at Kimmel Park and elsewhere.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Shipping (Col. Wilson) stated in reply:—Canadian repatriation has the first claim on the shipping in the North Atlantic, which, under natural conditions, is sufficient to provide for the conveyance of considerably more than the Canadian authorities require. The Canadian authorities notify the Ministry of Shipping in advance of the numbers for whom they require conveyance each month, these numbers being limited by the capacity of the railways in Canada to deal with the men. Having allotted ships to carry the numbers required by the Canadian authorities, the balance of shipping available after meeting Imperial needs is placed at the disposal of the American authorities for the repatriation of American troops. In the month of February this procedure was followed, but owing to a prolonged strike of ship repairers delaying the preparation of the ships, the programme for Canada could not be carried out in its entirety, vessels forming part of the month's programme being detained until March. In order to meet the situation which has arisen, the Government has specially allocated the "Olympic" to convey 6000 Canadian troops to Halifax, although the vessel would not, in natural circumstances, be considered suitable for this service.

#### Repatriated Dominion Troops.

Capt. Guest, Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury, replying to Major E. Wood, M.P. for Ripon, who asked what were the numbers of Australian, Canadian, and South African troops respectively who

had been returned to their respective countries since the commencement of the Armistice, said: I asked my hon. and gallant friend to repeat this question, as I regret to say there were inaccuracies in some of the figures in the answer given previously. It should also have been pointed out that the figures for Canada, Australia, and New Zealand included men in process of repatriation, who have been evacuated from France and are *en route via* the United Kingdom, and that the South African total included men repatriated direct from East Africa to South Africa. The detailed figures are as follows:—

CANADA.—Returned to Canada, 73,439; evacuated from France, and *en route via* United Kingdom, 43,671—total, 117,110.

AUSTRALIA.—Returned to Australia (including 1,582 repatriated direct from Egypt), 42,982; evacuated from France, and *en route via* United Kingdom, 22,172—total, 65,154.

NEW ZEALAND.—Returned to New Zealand (including 932 repatriated direct from Egypt), 17,243; evacuated from France, and *en route via* United Kingdom, 8,961—total, 26,205.

SOUTH AFRICA.—4,816 repatriated, of whom 3,807 were repatriated from East Africa.

### Demobilisation Scheme Working Well.

Information has reached England that the demobilisation of the troops of the 3rd Division is working out to the entire satisfaction of the military authorities in Canada.

A cablegram received by Sir Edward Kemp, Overseas Minister, from Major-General Mewburn, Minister of Militia and Defence, says:—"The 42nd Battalion reached Canada on time. Arrangements most satisfactory. Hope scheme can be carried through until the conclusion." This appreciation was conveyed to Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Currie, the Corps Commander, and to the heads of the departments engaged on the work of demobilisation in England.

#### Sailed for Home.

On Wednesday, March 12th, the steamship "Baltic" left Liverpool with 2,230 soldiers of the 3rd Division, comprising the following units:—1st C.M.R., 58th Bn., 2nd C.M.R., 43rd Bn., 10th Field Ambulance, and a number of *personnel*, as well as 500 civilian passengers.

On Thursday, March 13th, the steamship "Cretic" left Liverpool with 1,600 troops from Kimmel Park, Rhyl, on board.

About 1,700 Canadians left Liverpool on Saturday, March 15th, on the Cunarder "Royal George," for Halifax and New York. The C.P.O.S. "Metagama" also left with a large number of troops and their wives and families.

On Monday, March 17th, the White Star liner "Olympic" left Southampton with 207 officers and 5,170 men of the 3rd Division, comprising the 52nd and 116th Bnns., the 36th, 39th, and 45th Batteries, C.F.A., and details, as well as 310 civilians. Members of the Corporation attended in their robes. The Mayor delivered a farewell address, in the course of which he referred to the great gallantry of the Canadian Forces, and conveyed the gratitude and admiration of the Mother Country for their part in achieving the greatest victory in the world's history. There were 310 civilian first-class passengers.

The embarkation was carried out under the supervision of Brigadier-General D. M. Hogarth, Q.M.G., assisted by Lieut.-Col. S. Bosworth and Major Courtney.

—From Canada.