

*Reinforcements*

in later discussions to arrive at an effective use for large numbers of men who have come into the army in Canada, both general service and N.R.M.A., who never can be employed in battle.

The only other observation I would like to make in connection with this vital industrial effort in the production of shells and guns and certain other gear is that we in Canada are now a great source of supply for all our allies engaged with us in battle in Europe. In some things we are the only source and it is therefore most important that this industry be not disturbed for any reason, or otherwise there will be most serious consequences for all. In siege warfare you have to pay for victory either in shells or the lives of men, and very great quantities of shells must be expended if there is to be any progress at all.

Now may I turn to the N.R.M.A. Since I was called to office I have been investigating the situation in this department of the army. First, I find that this group of men has been held together for a multiplicity of purposes. Some of them have been trained as soldiers; others fully or partially trained as soldiers have been used from time to time as a sort of reserve of workers to move about and undertake construction and other tasks. Others have been similarly used to gather crops, to work in the mines, and in the woods.

I do not doubt that all these works are of national importance, but I do not think that they should be done by soldiers to the prejudice of their proceeding overseas.

I find that some of these men have been able to obtain remuneration on a scale which is extravagant, and I do not wonder that those who seek their personal advantage and who have had the chance to make large sums in cash would fail to come forward to volunteer for service overseas.

The policies which are to govern the N.R.M.A. in future are given in the statements made by the Prime Minister when he addressed the people of Canada by radio on 8th November. The particular points which it is my duty to develop now are in relation to the employment of that force in Canada.

In fair play to our men who have long served overseas and carried the heat and burden of the battle, it has been decided that they will have first claim on employment opportunities when the war ends. This means that the N.R.M.A. remaining who have not volunteered will be held until they can be demobilized without prejudice to the interests of our men returning from overseas.

These are all most important matters on which you will wish to be fully informed, and

[Mr. McNaughton.]

I shall do my best to give this information as briefly and as clearly as I can and to report progress as to the measures which have been adopted.

The position of those who volunteer for service overseas is straightforward. They cease at once to be members of the N.R.M.A. and pass to the depots and holding units to be given the final training and instruction which they require. They become in all respects an integral part of that great band who serve Canada by their own free will and whose pride it is to go where duty calls and needs dictate.

The position of N.R.M.A. personnel who do not convert to general service is not so simple. It had been my hope that once our vital need had been made clear—as it has been—and once opportunities had been given for considerate explanation—as they have been—that their number would have been very materially reduced.

The first business is to ensure that all who are physically fit and likely to become efficient soldiers are brought into units in balanced composition to act as a reserve to meet possible future requirements for combat operations. The arrangements for this require few changes in the existing organization and these can be effected quickly.

The elimination of units, formations, headquarters and local establishments which, in an earlier phase of the war, were required for strictly home defence, and the transfer of the personnel thus freed to other duties in keeping with our present need; the freeing of personnel in appropriate medical categories from home establishments, from extraneous employment, or their recall from leave are other matters to be attended to. This is being done as rapidly as individual cases can be reviewed and replacements provided wherever this is necessary in the public interest for the prosecution of the war.

For example, some hundreds of men were detailed some weeks ago to assist in the construction of the new hospital at Sunnybrook. These could have been ordered back to their units, but then this work, which is most urgent in the interests of our returned soldiers who have suffered wounds, would have been delayed. Therefore we have chosen to keep them on the job for the moment and replace all who are physically fit for combat duties by men in a lower category.

There are other tasks of national importance in the shell factories and in construction which are being dealt with in like manner.

The purpose is to concentrate in N.R.M.A. units for potential combat duties all men who