

Canadian Forces Act

their established reputation in world war I and world war II, I feel that they have a major role to play not only in meeting the immediate requirements of the men in the field but also in maintaining for these civilian soldiers liaison between the war front and the home front.

All of us who have had any experience in service life know that the atmosphere created while on military duty is quite contrary to many of the best values that have become a part of our basic outlook on life as a result of our experience in civilian society. I feel that the presence of personnel with no direct military connections and who are, as a matter of fact, somewhat detached from the necessary discipline and regimentation that is involved in all branches of the service can play a great role in maintaining the contact of the civilian soldier, the civilian airman or even the civilian naval man if you will, with the life back home from which he is temporarily separated.

This matter of welfare services is not merely a matter of providing games, cigarettes, moving pictures, tiddlywinks or any of the other recreative pursuits that we might mention. In answer to my first question that was placed on the order paper, those were largely the facilities that were given by the hon. Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton). When I asked what welfare and entertainment had been provided for the Canadian troops serving in Korea, emphasis was laid by the minister on sports, motion pictures, tape recordings, reading material, free cigarettes, et cetera. Those are necessary and important, but I do not feel that the real need is being met by merely providing those impersonal or, I might say, materialistic things. I feel that the method in which those games and other activities are carried out is exceedingly important. I feel that the personnel behind the program is significant. I believe the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) has repeatedly brought that point before the house by endeavouring to indicate that men who are trained for the specific task of warfare are not necessarily qualified to carry on a much different activity, namely the bringing of welfare assistance and entertainment, and even spiritual assistance, to the men serving in the front lines.

This brings me to another closely related problem that has been discussed in the house from time to time, that of assistance to families of service personnel actively engaged in the field. I had placed on the order paper questions in this regard and I received replies which were adequate enough in themselves

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

but which were not quite satisfactory. Perhaps I should put this in the form of a question now to the responsible minister. As to the administration of the army benevolent fund, in a reply to a question submitted I am informed that all members of the armed forces and the families of members of the armed forces actively engaged in the defence of Canada at the present time come under the benefits of the benevolent fund—whether it be the navy benevolent fund, the air force benevolent fund or the army benevolent fund—with the exception of new enlistees; that is, men who had no previous service in world war II. In view of certain information I have received from the families of men serving overseas, those who are left at home to face additional responsibilities and emergencies, such as sickness, I would make the suggestion that an arrangement be made whereby funds in the army benevolent fund might be made available to the dependents of new enlistees who have not had previous military experience in world war II. This is closely related to the suggestions put forward from this side of the house with respect to the acceptance of the generous offers of the four organizations who have offered their services to do auxiliary work with Canadian forces. Those organizations, because of the high qualifications of their personnel in connection with welfare, entertainment and spiritual guidance, could serve as an excellent liaison between the families on the home front and the men serving in the front lines.

I want to renew the questions I have already placed on the book, and ask again whether any additional welfare services are to be set up and, if so, what are the particulars thereof? The need has been demonstrated. It has been further demonstrated that welfare organizations qualified to meet the need have offered their services early in the present conflict. All that now awaits is some declaration of policy concerning these offers so generously made.

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to join in what has been said about the need for special facilities arranged by Canadians themselves for the non-military activities of Canadians in Korea, Europe, or anywhere else they may be outside of Canada. I do this particularly because I raised the subject on May 31, in the first session this year. I should like to refer back to what was said at that time, because it has some bearing on the extent to which members of the House of Commons should ask for some definite and unmistakable assurance at this time that something is going to be done.