

*War Appropriation—Army*

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bow River): Am I right in understanding that the minister says arrangements will be made whereby the dependents of soldiers who have been away without leave for more than twenty-one days will be looked after?

Mr. RALSTON: I went as far as I could in that regard. I cannot go further than to say that I have made a note of the case; that I realize it is not covered by the regulations now; that I shall see what the merits are in regard to making any general regulation about it and, having seen that, having received recommendations and having consulted my colleagues, I will decide what should be done. That is all I can tell my hon. friend.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bow River): I understand that the dependents' board of trustees has to do only with the dependents of soldiers, that it does not deal with the dependents of officers at all. I think some consideration should be given the dependents of officers. I have in mind one such dependent in the city of Calgary who made application to the dependents' board of trustees and was turned down, I am informed, on the ground that she was the wife of an officer. It seems to me that where the dependents, even of officers, are in need they should be considered by this board, but I understand that is not the case. Would the minister explain that situation?

Mr. RALSTON: That is so. Of course the dependents of officers receive allowances at rates higher than are paid the dependents of other ranks. These regulations do not apply to the dependents of those above the rank of warrant officer class 2. They apply to those up to and including warrant officer class 2, one reason being the different rate of dependents' allowance above that rank.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bow River): Take the case of a captain's wife, for instance, who is in dire need, not receiving sufficient to properly maintain herself. Would that be given consideration by the board as a special case, or would it be automatically thrown out because the dependent happened to be the wife of a captain?

Mr. RALSTON: There are more difficulties in this connection than perhaps my hon. friend realizes, and I can mention one offhand: Hospital standards, for instance, and things of the kind which are constantly coming up. It is considered, generally speaking, that the higher dependents' allowance, plus the differ-

[Mr. Ralston.]

ence in pay received by the officer, create a situation in which the special provisions concerning the dependents' board of trustees are not required. My hon. friend will say that there is the odd case, and perhaps more than the odd case, of this kind. I can only tell him that I will look into it. As a matter of fact I remember one case of which I heard, but it was the case of a man who had been promoted from the ranks and I think the claim was with regard to an indebtedness incurred while his wife was receiving the lower dependents' allowance. I can only say to my hon. friend that I will examine the situation and see if there are any other grounds than those which I have mentioned for not including the dependents of officers within the provisions of these regulations.

Mr. MacNICOL: If a soldier is reported missing in action is the dependents' allowance continued without interruption, or is there an interval until the department finds out whether the man is alive or dead?

Mr. RALSTON: It is carried on for at least six months.

Mr. MacNICOL: Without interruption?

Mr. RALSTON: Yes.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): I have a case of a soldier who just returned from overseas. Some four or five months ago his wife was taken ill and had to be rushed to the hospital. Her bills were paid partly by her friends and partly from her dependents' allowance. Is there any chance of that soldier getting any of that money back, or is there a time limit within which application must be made to the dependents' board of trustees?

Mr. RALSTON: I think the only limitation as far as time is concerned is the proviso that the man must be still in the service. I believe that is a case which would be considered by the board on the particular circumstances; I cannot go further than that. Cases of that kind have come before the board and assistance has been given.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): Would it be covered if the soldier was in the service during the time his wife was in the hospital?

Mr. RALSTON: No. As I remember the regulations the person who makes the application must be the dependent of a soldier at the time the application is before the committee or the board.

Mr. GILLIS: I wonder if the minister could give us the number of applications received, and the number granted, by provinces.