

come from the west. I have discussed them on a number of occasions with persons who ought to be able to rectify the situation. On coming back to Ottawa I made representations to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mitchell), and the minister had his deputy send out a letter which I am going to read to the house in order to have it on *Hansard*, because it states more clearly than I could otherwise the policy of the government in relation to this matter.

The letter is dated Ottawa, February 1, 1943, the beginning of this month. It happens to be addressed to Mr. Justice W. T. Henderson, chairman of the mobilization board at Toronto, but the same letter went to the chairman of every board. I would like to recall to hon. members that this matter was turned over to the Labour department on December 1, so that after all there has not been any considerable delay in the minister's taking action upon it.

This is the letter:

Dear Mr. Justice Henderson,

All will agree that uniformity of method in dealing with various problems by each of the mobilization boards across Canada is very desirable.

After conferring with the man-power committee of the cabinet it has been decided that interpretative letters will be sent out from time to time indicating in some detail the policy in respect to the various phases of the national selective service mobilization regulations.

This is the first of such letters which will be issued by the labour department.

The growing scarcity of agricultural labour makes it increasingly important that essential agricultural workers be encouraged to remain on farms.

In the following the policy in regard to agricultural farm workers is briefly outlined:

(1) An agricultural worker is, of course, free to volunteer for active service.

(2) It is the intention of the regulations that agricultural workers are to be retained in agricultural employment as far as practical through the national selective service (civilian) regulations. To the extent that their services can be spared from the farms during the "off-crop" season they are to be encouraged to take temporary seasonal employment in lumbering and logging, forestry, fishing, coal and base metal mining, and acceptance of seasonal work in such industries does not deprive men of their right to postponement as agricultural workers providing they return to farm work when the season re-opens.

(3) Agricultural workers are to be discouraged from taking employment outside agriculture except in the primary industries indicated above. If they leave agriculture without a permit from a national selective service officer contrary to the regulations they of course lose any special rights to claim deferment as agricultural workers.

(4) Farm workers who apply for postponement of military training are to be granted postponement until further notice.

[Mr. Gardiner.]

In passing I call the attention of hon. members to the fact that in the regulations the word used is "shall"—that "the board shall". It also provides that the decisions in connection with these matters are to be made by a quorum of the board. The board consists of three members, and two form a quorum.

Mr. TUSTIN: Will these boys continue to be called?

Mr. GARDINER: I am just coming to that:

Farm workers who apply for postponement from military training are to be granted postponement until further notice, unless it is established that the applicant is not an essential worker in agriculture. The regulations it should be noted do not require the farmer to produce proof that he is an essential farm labourer. If the board doubts that a man is an essential farm worker, even though postponement until further notice is given, it can always exercise the right to deny postponement by calling such a man before the board when established facts are presented.

The statement and the inference of the statement is that if the man is given postponement he is not called again at least until the regulations are changed or until the board is able to show that the information he gave was not correct.

Mr. COLDWELL: It is up to the board to prove that he is non-essential?

Mr. GARDINER: Yes.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): May I interject? It is a most interesting statement the minister has made. Is he able to tell us how often applicants are called before these boards? Because I have never heard of a single case in New Brunswick where an applicant actually appeared himself before the board.

Mr. GARDINER: I think my hon. friend will agree that he has a better knowledge of legal matters than I have, but a man can appear by letter, and most of them do appear that way.

Mr. GRAYDON: They appear personally too.

Mr. GARDINER: There are men who appear before some boards personally. To continue:

If a worker who upon receipt of "order—medical examination" claims to be an agricultural worker but is not considered by the board to be essential to the operation of a specific farm—