

*Reinforcements*

Mr. BROOKS: Will any of the mustering out be taken, men who have received their training?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: The personnel who have been remustered are in the other stream which was arranged before we took this action.

Mr. BROOKS: They are not included.

Mr. McNAUGHTON: No.

Mr. BROOKS: We cannot get a definite answer on that at the present time. As regards this 16,000 N.R.M.A. personnel, covered by to-day's order, we know that in reinforcing there are certain geographical areas which reinforce certain units at the front representative of those areas. Supposing one area has not enough men from the 16,000, will reinforcements come from some other geographical area, or will each area reinforce its own?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: It has not been found practical to keep a one to one relation between areas in Canada and units in the field. We have tried always, whenever service conditions permitted, to put people in units that were in some way affiliated with their place of origin. An honest attempt was made in that direction, but it breaks down; you cannot sectionalize in that way.

Mr. BROOKS: In other words, you may have British Columbia men reinforcing Ontario, or Nova Scotia reinforcing Quebec.

Mr. McNAUGHTON: It happens; but try to reshuffle them after they have been in the unit for a few days and you will find that they dig their toes in and do not want to move.

Mr. BROOKS: Are the men that are taken from ordnance and the other corps to be replaced by N.R.M.A. personnel who were in Canada?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: In some cases the answer would be, yes. We have to use hands and feet for labour wherever we can get them. In many cases there is a scaling down of establishments.

Mr. BROOKS: All across Canada?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: All across Canada, in accordance with the plan. At one stage, with the possibility of an attack on our west and east coasts, and in view of the possibilities of carrier-borne and other aircraft coming in, quite rightly for the safety and the peace of Canada, coast defence, anti-aircraft and other guards were arranged. But with the progress of the war these forms and scales of attack have become a remote contingency and we are justified in withdrawing men from them. It is a matter of common sense.

[Mr. McNaughton.]

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Has that been done in any numbers? I am thinking about the gentlemen who are on Partridge island in Saint John harbour and have been there for three and a half years.

Mr. McNAUGHTON: This process is continually under way, and as soon as our advisers and the chief of staff say that there is no reason for a particular installation, then it comes to us and I act on their advice and tell the staff to disband or to reduce it, or whatever the decision may be. We do not want people sitting in idleness when there is nothing to be defended against.

Mr. BROOKS: What is the maximum age for infantry overseas?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: The maximum is forty, but the man must meet the pulhem requirements.

Mr. BROOKS: I understand that; but men are being sent over from these other corps up to forty years of age for infantry if their pulhems permit?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: The thirty-ninth birthday is the bar line.

Mr. BROOKS: I do not suppose the minister could tell me how many of those who have been mustered out of these other corps have been between the ages of thirty-five and forty.

Mr. McNAUGHTON: The information I have is that there would not be many, but I have not that break-down.

Mr. BROOKS: Well, I happen to know there are quite a few. The minister stated that N.R.M.A. personnel would take the places of these men here in Canada, but I should like to ask whether he would not consider a well-trained N.R.M.A. man of twenty or twenty-one a better soldier to send overseas than these men between the ages of thirty-five and forty who were drawn from these other sources.

Mr. McNAUGHTON: The answer is in the affirmative, but until to-day I had no such authority.

Mr. BROOKS: I understand your position. I should like to ask the minister also if at the present time his department is encountering any objections from men who have been home from overseas, such as men who have been on prisoner of war escort and others, to their return overseas, while they see in Canada so many young men of military age trained under the N.R.M.A.