

D 48270

The problem of reinforcements concerns only one of the three armed services. The navy and the air force have no such problem. The navy, with 85,000 men in the service, has reached the peak of its manpower needs. The air force, with 190,000 men in its ranks, has passed the peak of its manpower requirements. For that, we should all be thankful. The reason is that air force casualties, though costly, have been very much lighter than were anticipated.

The present strength of the army including the draftees is over 455,000 men. Of this number, about 390,000 are volunteers. Over 45,000 men have volunteered for general service since January 1st of the present year. Most of the men now in the army have been in its ranks for one, two, three or four years. All but recent recruits have received long, rigorous and varied training.

#### *Concerning the Training of Reinforcements*

It is against this background that we should examine the statement that reinforcements without adequate training are being sent into action. The Canadian army is a huge organization. At one time or another, more than 650,000 men have served in its ranks during this war. Of that great number a few may have failed to receive all the training prescribed. Competent officers have made the most careful review. They find that the number of these exceptional cases is exceedingly small. The highest military advisers of the government are satisfied that reinforcements sent into action have been well trained.

The record of Canada's army in Italy, France, Belgium and Holland is not the record of an army of which any part lacked adequate training. On the contrary, the military achievements of our army are the best possible evidence of the efficiency of its training. Since they went into action in July, 1943, our troops have received a steady stream of reinforcements to replace casualties. The recent victories on the Scheldt are the answer to those who say that, because of insufficiently trained reinforcements, the army is not being adequately supported.

The need for reinforcements is, of course, based upon the number of casualties. When we speak of the number of casualties, this does not mean the number killed. It means the number killed, wounded, missing and prisoners of war, and also those who because of sickness or other incapacity are not available for immediate combat.

The probable number of casualties has to be estimated in advance. Before D-Day, no one could possibly know how great the casualties would be in northwestern Europe. The military experts of all the forces which landed in France made the most

D 48271

careful estimates of probable casualties. These estimates were based on experience in other theatres, on the probable nature of the operations in France and the Low Countries, and on the most careful appreciation of the strength of enemy resistance.

In the actual fighting, the total casualties in our army have not been as great as the number estimated and provided for. Infantry casualties were lower than expected in the actual landings and higher than estimated in the heavy fighting since the beachheads were established in June. The army has been obliged to transfer some of the men originally trained for other arms into the pool of infantry reinforcements. This procedure is known as "remustering". Such transfers are bound to be a disappointment for men who have been highly trained in a particular arm of the service and find themselves obliged, by the circumstances of war, to transfer to another arm. But such troops are not untrained. All "re-mustered" troops have had basic infantry training. In addition to basic training and the training they have received in their particular arm, they are given further specialized infantry training before being sent into combat.

#### *Concerning the Reserve of Reinforcements*

I now come to the question: Is there an adequate reserve of reinforcements for the army? In the opinion of the military authorities, no difficulty is likely to arise except in relation to reinforcements for the infantry. Infantry reinforcements have been adequate to meet requirements to date. But, during his recent visit to the army overseas, Colonel Ralston learned that to provide replacements for future casualties at present rates, the flow of infantry reinforcements from Canada should be accelerated. One fact needs to be emphasized. There is not an overall shortage of potential reinforcements. Many thousands of men are in training now and enlistments are continuing at an encouraging rate. Because we cannot tell how long the war may last, we must, as long as a possible need may arise, continue to recruit men for the army to keep up the supply of reinforcements. But recent recruits and those who enlist from now on will not be available until they are trained.

Colonel Ralston's report to the government disclosed an immediate problem which had to be faced. That problem is to find the means of speeding up the flow of fully trained infantry reinforcements to meet, not an actual shortage of reinforcements now, but a possible shortage in the next few months.

The question many of you will ask at once, is: why not send overseas some of the draftees who are fully trained in Canada under the National Resources Mobilization Act?