

Supply—National Defence

of having substantial forces in being, fully trained, well equipped and operationally ready, this plan presented no particular problem.

Incidentally, also, I might say that, of the various battalions available, the first Queen's Own was selected because it was in line for overseas service, and the competence and training state of its personnel made it generally suitable for the job to be done.

While I am dealing with that I would like to answer some of the derogatory remarks, if I may use those words, made about the 1st Queen's Own by the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Pearkes) which I must say coming from him surprised me. In those remarks the hon. member pretty clearly intimated that this battalion was not in his opinion qualified for the service which had been allocated to it.

The fact is that the first battalion of the 1st Queen's Own Regiment is a very fine, well trained unit, well organized and well led. There were no untrained men in the battalion even though some of them, as is always the case, have been moved into the battalion within the past few months. No battalion in peace time on short notice can move without certain things being done. The first battalion was on short notice and was ordered to report to Halifax by air.

When that order was received, as would be the case in any battalion moving on short notice, there were certain men in the 1st Queen's Own not available for these reasons: Some were below immediate medical standards, others were under 18 years of age, there were some under 21 years of age and married who would not be able to claim their marriage allowance and there were a few who had less than six months to serve and who had indicated they did not wish to re-engage. There were also a few compassionate cases, there were some on leave who could not be reached in time, there were some on courses. There were four, I think, absent without leave. Generally speaking there were a total of 127 in these categories, as would be the case in any battalion ordered to make a quick move. These probably will ultimately be doing what we might call "the housekeeping" for the 1st Queen's Own at their home station in Calgary during the battalion's absence.

In order to bring the battalion up to strength quickly, and in fact up to almost 100 over peacetime strength, certain personnel—I think about 240 which was the number mentioned by my hon. friend—were drafted from the first battalion to the second battalion. We must remember these are both battalions of the same regiment.

[Mr. Campney.]

Mr. Pearkes: Do you not mean they were drafted from the second battalion to the first battalion?

Mr. Campney: Yes, I am sorry. Men were drafted from the second battalion to the first battalion. These two battalions, of course, belong to the same regiment and being sister battalions the men required could be supplied quickly. Very little time will be taken in bringing the 2nd Queen's Own up to strength again. I think there are approximately between two and three hundred at the regimental depot of the two battalions in Calgary. No other units were asked to supply drafts. The whole battalion is a Queen's Own battalion and it is approximately 100 over peacetime strength. Therefore, if you take the 96 which I think is the exact figure by which it is over strength, all of whom went to Halifax, and if you take off the 127, you pretty well account for the transfer to it of the men from the 2nd Queen's Own.

One other point raised by the hon. member when he spoke was his statement to the effect it has always been the practice in the past that the men who are under 19 should not be sent out of Canada. Well, I think the hon. member is in error in that regard. So far as I know, it has always been the practice, certainly ever since I have been familiar with the department, that men over 18 have gone to the NATO force in Europe. It is true that in active warfare such as Korea where they went out as combatant troops the age was 19. It is left pretty much to the exigencies of the situation into which they are going. In this case the same rule was applied to the police force troops as was applied in the case of our troops going to NATO.

The hon. member wanted to know how many of these men were under 19. As a matter of fact, there were 99 in the first Queen's Own and 65 in the 2nd Queen's Own. Service abroad can take place any time after 18 years of age. I think the set-up of the 1st Queen's Own was a normal set-up and on short notice the force that was required was provided quickly and without any confusion. The hon. gentleman said that these men were hurriedly brought from the 2nd Queen's Own to the 1st Queen's Own. If he means by "hurriedly" in point of time that is quite correct, but I can assure him there was no confusion or difficulty in the matter. It was achieved very quickly and smoothly.

I might say that consideration was given briefly to airlifting to the Middle East a battalion from the brigade group in Germany but this proved entirely unnecessary and for obvious reasons we would have been reluctant under existing circumstances to weaken our NATO forces in Europe.