

D 48262

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.

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?

That will seem to many of you the easiest way of meeting the problem. It is not, however, in accord with the policy of keeping our army overseas a 100 per cent voluntary army if we possibly can. The voluntary system of raising our overseas forces has produced splendid results during five years of war. We have always believed that Canada's forces, having begun as voluntary forces, would be more effective, and that the country would be more united in their support, if we continued to rely upon the voluntary system for reinforcements as long as the voluntary system continued to be effective.