

Mr. JACKMAN: —and if it does, I should like to know whether there is any substantial number of men, and how many, who have actually received commissions in that way.

Mr. POWER: What clause is it?

Mr. JACKMAN: That is appendix 3, 1(c). Then there is another clause with reference to the man who is shifted about, and who comes to the attention of headquarters. Clause G is also pertinent:

The R.A.F. authorities, in conjunction with R.C.A.F. overseas headquarters, will at once review the case of every airman in all aircrew categories who has been in an operational unit for more than two months.

One would expect that these men, who I am sure we all feel, and the public feel, should be entitled to a commission, namely, the boys who have served for more than two months in operational flights in Europe, should be recognized, and that their cases should come up automatically for review. But we find that seventy-five per cent of the Royal Canadian Air Force aircrew who are reported killed or missing as of recent date were not commissioned, which would seem to indicate that this clause, which calls for an automatic review, is not very operative, or at any rate not very effective, in obtaining commissions for aircrew who are serving and have served for some period over the battlefields of Europe. As a matter of fact, to reinforce the point which I made, that it is most difficult for a graduate who has not obtained a commission on graduation to obtain that commission subsequently, I find that only 607 sergeant-pilots have been commissioned in Canada subsequently to graduation, and 1,464 have been commissioned overseas, which is a very small percentage of the number who, one might expect, would be entitled to consideration on that score. I think the minister will agree that there must be a bottle-neck somewhere, and if no one is actually trying to hold things down, certainly commissions are not flowing as freely as we think the men are entitled to have them.

There are one or two other points in regard to commissions which I should like to make. One is that while there is no limitation on the number of pilots, navigators and bombers who graduate and who may become officers, nevertheless there was, until some time in the near past, a condition that made it impossible for more than the very top number, about the top third of the graduating class, to receive these commissions. As we also know, the requirements for enlistment or for men to get into the air force in the early days were even more stringent than they are to-day from the

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educational point of view and perhaps from some other points of view, with the result—and I am not casting the slightest reflection upon the type of manhood we have in the air force to-day—that those who went in at the beginning were perhaps on the average slightly higher. But with the old rule in force in the early days, we find there are a great many in the bottom two-thirds of the class, perhaps brilliant fellows, in every way entitled to commissions, who have not received them, as indicated by the figures I gave showing how few had been commissioned after once leaving the school.

Then, again, as the hon. member for York West mentioned this afternoon, an aircrew officer receives better treatment if he becomes a prisoner of war in Germany. Whether or not a man can be promoted if he is a prisoner, I do not know. I have heard it said that if his recommendation had gone through in Great Britain or in Canada prior to his capture, the Germans will recognize his commission; otherwise they will not. Perhaps the minister will throw some light on that question.

One other point is that the legislature of British Columbia has passed a resolution, reflecting the opinion of that great province, in favour of commissions for all members of aircrew.

Another matter upon which I hope the minister will throw some light in the course of his reply is in connection with recruiting. We should like to know what the status is as regards the waiting list of applicants who are eager to get into the air force at the present time. How large is the reserve? It will be interesting also to know how many members of the Royal Canadian Air Force are employed on ground duty who would be available to the army as first-class fighters and who might be exchanged with the army for men who are not fit for front-line fighting. Has the minister made any such proposal to the army, and would the army be willing to cooperate in that direction?

Mr. POWER: Would the hon. member be good enough to repeat that? I want to get it more accurately.

Mr. JACKMAN: I understand that there are some members of the Royal Canadian Air Force ground crew who would be fit as fighting men in the army, and at the same time the army has among its ranks those who are not fit for combatant service, low category men who would be good material for ground crew. Could an exchange be made? The suggestion has been made that the minister might not care for that idea, but there is nothing wrong with some of these men, and, after all, valuable as the services of the ground crew are,