

Canadian Forces Act

canteens certainly served a purpose. There is no reason why they should not be able to serve the same purpose during this Korean conflict.

If there are no recreational facilities, Mr. Speaker, for troops on leave, they are going to make their own. Some of the recreation that troops on their own make is not good. If they cause any damage or disturb the people among whom they are billeted, it is rather inclined to give the troops a bad name. Boredom is one of the greatest morale breakers the army has to face. If there are no facilities to relieve them of that boredom, the morale of the troops is going to hit an extremely low point. When we had no place to go during the last war, most of us ended up in some kind of trouble, probably not very bad but not very good either. I would urge the government, therefore, to set up some board or committee to investigate the matter of welfare for the troops while they are not in the front lines. The government could ascertain whether or not it would be a good idea to allow the major service clubs to again render the same services as they did during the last war. I think it would be a great help to public relations within the country if our men did have a place to go so that they could keep out of mischief.

I am a firm believer in all of these service clubs and the job that they do, not only for the physical welfare of the troops but the moral welfare as well. We know that while they are having some sort of supervised recreation they are not getting themselves into trouble; they are not bothering anyone, and are probably doing themselves a lot of good. The recreation that they find within these canteens set up by the various service organizations is good, wholesome fun. As I said before, the men can have lunches, buy cigarettes or soft drinks, and many of the things that they miss from around home. As the hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. Gillis) has said, even if the service clubs give the boys Canadian cigarettes they would be doing a good job. I strongly urge the government and the minister to seriously consider accepting the offers of the service clubs so the boys will have something to do with their spare time.

Mr. D. S. Harkness (Calgary East): Last week, Mr. Speaker, the largest single group of returned veterans from Korea arrived in Calgary. They were two hundred members of the second battalion of the P.P.C.L.I. In Calgary they were released on thirty days' leave. A good many of them were men who had been stationed at Currie barracks or were from the vicinity of Calgary. Since some of

[Mr. Thomas.]

these men have now been in Calgary for some days, there is a considerable amount of direct information available as to conditions in Korea. I have just returned from spending three days in Calgary, and a considerable number of the people with whom I was talking brought up this very question. They had been talking to these returned men and the people were hot under the collar over the lack of amenities and auxiliary services. Most of these people were urging me to bring the matter again to the attention of the house. The information indicated that the services leave a great deal to be desired, and that they could be easily improved.

Now that the Canadian people are becoming aware of the lack of amenities in Korea, they are going to demand that whatever improvements can be made shall be made immediately. I believe the Department of National Defence should not lose any time in taking action. In spite of what has been said concerning the difficulty in having the Salvation Army, the Legion, or any of the other people who carried on the auxiliary services during the last war, act in Korea, I believe they could do a good job in Korea. If the department is determined not to put them into Korea, at least some of the other suggestions that have been made could be carried out. The boys can be supplied with Canadian cigarettes. Canteen facilities and things of that sort can be set up by the army itself. It seems to me that this is not a matter about which we should have to do any more really than to bring it to the attention of the Department of National Defence in order to have it corrected. I am greatly surprised that the matter has had to be brought before the house here time after time and that every time there has been expressed on the part of the government an apparent lack of desire to do anything about it. I hope there will no longer be that lack of desire to take any action.

Mr. E. D. Fulton (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I am just going to make one suggestion. It has already been alluded to by the hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. Gillis). I am not sure that we did not hatch the idea together and simultaneously, probably owing to our proximity in the house, as a result of the seating arrangement. It is that the minister might well take into consideration whether he should not go out and have a look at Korea himself. I make that suggestion not in any critical sense, because the minister referred to the fact that he had hoped and had intended to get out there but just had not found it possible to do so.

I accept without reservation his statement in that regard. But he is now in Europe where he is to meet the troops of the 27th