

Canadian Forces Act

interview with the Primate of the Anglican Church. I should like to quote the preceding paragraph. It reads:

The primate visited every unit of the Canadian brigade and said he found the troops well clothed and fed, and well led. Their relations with the Korean civilian population were excellent.

I have mentioned the situation as we understand it. I go much further than that and say that if something needs to be done at any stage, then we shall see that it is done and done in the most effective way possible. So far I am informed by the officers who have been there that they do not believe more could be done under the circumstances.

The hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. Gillis) brought up several questions relating to pensions and allowances. Some of those questions should be put to my colleague the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Lapointe). The hon. member suggested, as he has on other occasions, that the widow of a soldier who had service in the second world war and who died while with the Canadian forces, but whose death was not attributable to service, should nevertheless entitle his widow to a pension. This is a question for veterans affairs, but I would point out that if we were to extend the principle to that extent we would be really extending the insurance principle to service personnel in peacetime, and that is a pretty large advantage to give to service personnel and not other classes of the community. We have tried in so far as we could with pay, allowances, clothing and all the other aspects of service, to put personnel in the three services on a footing similar to that enjoyed by persons doing similar jobs in the best industries in Canada. We are trying to maintain that standard. The hon. member referred to dependents allowances at this time. I have nothing to add to the answer given by my parliamentary assistant in the house yesterday.

Several members referred to the desirability of the department making compulsory assignments of pay to wives who were not receiving payments from their husbands. Let me ask hon. members this question. Would it make for justice and ease of administration or a sense of fairness if service personnel saw that the Department of National Defence was making an arbitrary decision as between a man and wife, or substituting its decision for that of the civilian courts? We have taken the view that that is not our job in peacetime, and I think that attitude would commend itself to the judgment of most hon. members. If the wife obtains an order from the courts for assignment, then of course we respect the court order. We are now considering reverting to the wartime practice of making entitlement to married allowances

[Mr. Claxton.]

dependent upon an assignment. The development of the armed forces, and this half-war we are in today, may perhaps make that desirable. I have already seen a draft of an order to give effect to this. It would not require any amendment to the act, but an amendment to the pay and allowances regulations.

Mr. Fraser: Your department also have their officers use a little pressure on the men.

Mr. Claxton: That is right. We do that in the case of any creditor but more than in other cases, the wife.

Mr. Fraser: I know they have done it in many cases.

Mr. Claxton: We do that particularly in the case of a wife. If a wife is not receiving proper treatment by her husband she usually writes the commanding officer, and the commanding officer parades the man and goes into the case. We are also assisted in this work by the welfare officers of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Wherever a case of that character arises the wife can go to the Department of Veterans Affairs welfare officer—and they are distributed right across the country—and the case will be looked into; then a report will be made not only to the commanding officer of the unit but to headquarters as well, and we will use all possible moral persuasion.

Mr. Fraser: That is what I meant.

Mr. Claxton: The hon. member for Kamloops referred to the welcome being extended by Canadians to the returning troops. I appreciate what he said, and I myself have looked into this matter in connection with the return, for example, of a company of Princess Patricia's due today. I asked that arrangements should be made to give them a suitable welcome. The difficulty about the matter is this. Our troops for the most part come back on United States troopships and land at the port of Seattle. The troopship arrives with some hundreds or thousands of men on board. The city of Seattle has been magnificent in giving both sends-offs and receptions to the troops, including Canadians. It is a big occasion. Then our units go on board a train and arrive at Vancouver, or at other centres across Canada, in relatively small parties. This makes the job of welcoming much more difficult from the point of view of arousing civilian interest. Furthermore, a considerable number of our returning troops are brought back in our own aircraft; they include men who have been wounded, men returning for courses and men who have served their terms. They arrive at air stations at all hours of the night and day and