

The Prime Minister therefore recommends that before any further units of the force, or any special units asked for by the war office shall be authorized, or authority given for raising the same, authority shall be obtained from Your Royal Highness in Council for that purpose.

The Committee concur in the foregoing and submit the same for approval.

In that connection I should mention that during part of April, the whole of May and June and the early part of July, 1916, I was administering the Department of Militia and Defence, under circumstances which are familiar to the Committee. I presided at meetings of the Militia Council during each of those months—on the 19th, 27th and 29th of April; the 8th, 16th and 19th of May, the 2nd of June and the 6th of July. I learned at one of those meetings—I cannot recall which one—that a number of battalions had been authorized by the then Minister of Militia and Defence while I was administering the Department. I am not attributing blame to my hon. friend in that respect; I have no doubt he may have considered that he was acting within his rights. I merely mention the fact to show what took place and to explain the reason for the passing of this Order in Council. In order that I may make that perfectly plain, I will quote a criticism made by the member for Edmonton (Mr. Oliver) on May 8, 1916. This criticism was in line with a number of communications which had come to me from different parts of the country complaining that in certain localities altogether too many battalions were being recruited at the same time. The member for Edmonton said:

I know there was recruiting for a regiment to be known as the Bantams of Vancouver, at Edmonton. They may have ceased their operations at Edmonton now. This fact demonstrates that no discrimination whatever is used in the securing of recruits, in the way of having regard to the requirements of civil life; that the department simply goes after recruits whenever and wherever it can get them, without regard to any other circumstance. And more than that, the fact that so many units are being recruited in the same place at the same time tends against the success of the work. There is instituted a spirit of competition between the different officers who are engaged in recruiting that does not tend to success. I admit that probably to have two battalions recruiting at the same time and in the same place may give a healthy measure of competition; but when more than two are recruited it certainly is injurious rather than beneficial.

To which I replied:

My hon. friend no doubt has in mind that these regiments are recruited, I suppose, from a considerable district around Edmonton. I remember one which went through not long

ago whose members had come to a considerable extent from the Peace River country. There has been an endeavour in some cases at least, to my certain knowledge, to adjust the recruiting to the requirements of local conditions. I cannot recall that any representations ever came to my attention concerning Edmonton, but I do recall other cases; and in those cases an endeavour was made by the department to meet local conditions through the guidance of recruiting officers.

That is the policy to which I have already referred and which has been repeatedly referred to in the House during the last as well as during the present session.

During the period between April 6 and June 6, both inclusive, when I was administering the department, the ex-Minister of Militia authorized eleven new battalions in all. Through some misunderstanding I was not advised of the fact that these battalions were being authorized, and that explains completely the reason why the Order in Council of June 10 was passed—in order that we might have some check upon the authorization of battalions and in order that too great a number might not be recruited at one time in the same locality. I think that the extent to which the raising of battalions in the same locality was authorized is greater than the ex-Minister of Militia himself realized.

I have procured from the Adjutant-General a statement showing the number of battalions recruiting at any one time in various cities and towns in different parts of the country. It would appear that for a certain period about sixteen battalions were authorized to recruit in Toronto.

Sir SAM HUGHES: Will the Prime Minister give me the dates?

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: I will send to my hon. friend a copy of the statement which has been handed to me by an officer of the department.

Sir SAM HUGHES: I should have been pleased to have had it in advance, but that does not matter.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: There are several other illustrations of the same character, where half a dozen battalions or more were being recruited in one locality at the same time. The Order in Council of the 10th June, 1916, was designed merely for the purpose of having fuller consideration given to the number of battalions that should be recruited at one time in one place. I do not think there is anything further that I need to say on the subject at the moment. I will also send to my hon.