

there are 60,000. I presume there is an explanation for the difference between the two figures?

Mr. RALSTON: There is, I said 60,000, and that is a low figure. I should have said that in mentioning the number which might be available to send overseas I was counting only 50,000 of them.

Mr. GRAYDON: That is, 50,000 of the 73,000?

Mr. RALSTON: Yes, 50,000 of the 73,000. My hon. friend asked about the 73,000, and I have the figures here to give him. About mid-January there were practically 73,000 N.R.M.A. personnel on strength. Of that number forty-seven per cent were in operational troops in Canada; fifteen per cent were in non-operational troops, twenty per cent in training, eight per cent in depot reselection and disposal units and seven per cent on leave. That means that they are on extended leave, in connection with forestry, mining and so on. That seven per cent is about 5,000, so that the net number in Canada apart from those on leave is something like 68,000. Of these 68,000 I am suggesting that about 50,000 would be medically fit for overseas service.

Mr. GRAYDON: Not all of the 73,000 are A-1.

Mr. RALSTON: I should have said also, and I am now reminded that this number of which I am speaking is not simply in Canada alone. It is in the north American area, in the western hemisphere. There are some in Labrador, some in the Caribbean, some in Newfoundland and a few in Alaska.

Mr. GRAYDON: The minister has mentioned troops in other parts of the world, and in that connection there is a matter I wish to bring up before his appropriations are passed. In the newspapers of Canada this morning the Associated Press carried an interview with an army intelligence officer of the United States, on which the minister may have some information. The news item is as follows:

A United States army intelligence officer said to-night loose talk, mostly radiating from Seattle, enabled the Japanese to withdraw thousands of men and vast quantities of material out of Kiska last August to leave invading United States and Canadian forces "with a hollow victory tantamount to defeat."

He went on to say:

Common was the knowledge in Seattle that we planned to attack Kiska and, prior to the invasion, unauthorized persons, both military and civilian, openly disclosed the date, August 15.

As a result the Japs got out, voluntarily. Not one remained on the island when our troops arrived at three o'clock in the morning. Some scattered machine-gun fire the day before, reported by our reconnaissance fliers, indicated presence of hostile troops then. Even these were gone when we got there.

They knew we were coming—and when. So accurately and so far in advance were the Japs tipped off that, had they chosen to implement their forces, they might have annihilated us.

I raise the question at this time because it is apropos of this appropriation, though I was particularly pleased to note that no reference was made to any leaks as far as our Canadian people are concerned. Leaks are a matter of great concern; and I would ask the minister if he has any comment to make in connection with this dispatch, because it does seem to me that this is a good time for the minister and the government to caution the Canadian people on this particular point which is perhaps more important at the present time than any other because, not so much on account of what we are saying in Canada, but because of incorrect statements made by people in high positions outside Canada that this war will be over in 1944 so far as Germany is concerned, it is important that the Canadian people should realize that we are a long way yet from winning this war, and therefore we should as a people realize that loose talk cannot be tolerated now any more than it could be tolerated two or three years ago. I am not so sure but that people in this country are a little prone to treat the whole question of the war a little more lightly now than we as the Canadian people should. Here is a case in point of what loose talk can do. I can quite understand that loose talk may be just thoughtlessness. Nevertheless, whether it be merely thoughtlessness or by design, loose talk has the same result, and I was astounded to realize that because of loose talk in another country we might have had a very serious situation facing the Kiska expedition.

I shall have accomplished my purpose in rising to-night if I can bring to the attention of the government and of the house and of the Canadian people the importance of seeing to it that we maintain our war fervour, if you like, at this particular time because I realize, as I think hon. members and the government and the people generally do, that we are a long way from the end, and that this is no time for us to relax in our efforts. I think it is time the people of Canada recognize our responsibility in the matter of loose talk, and I should like to hear from the minister on that because I think it is important from the point of view of our morale and from the point of view of our national security as well, because