

*Reinforcements*

purports to use a document in making his statement. My hon. friend can ask his question without making any reference whatever to whom the telegram comes from or to whom it is addressed, but if he is going to use the document he must be prepared to table it.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Assuming that he takes the responsibility for the contents of the document he does not have to table it. But if he is using a public document and is called upon to table it, he must table it. That rule is applicable principally to ministers of the crown who have access to information in public documents. There is no specific rule with respect to private communications. A member of the house should not use a private communication to quote from it to the house unless he assumes responsibility for the context. That is the rule and it is founded on logic.

Mr. NOSEWORTHY: Mr. Speaker, to save your ruling I will drop that. The telegram is sent to another member of the house. Were it sent to me personally I would ask your ruling and either table it or read it.

My next question is, would you tell us whether the need for reinforcements at the present time is a factor in determining whether men who have been wounded two or three times are sent back into the line? That is, would they normally be sent back as they are being sent, were there sufficient reinforcements at the present time?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: The answer to the hon. member's question is, first, that before a man is returned to the front he must be physically fit to the standards which have been laid down. If a man has had three wounds, and certain periods of service, the particulars of which I have not under my hand at the moment, he is entitled to certain extra periods of leave. If the hon. member wishes the details I will send down to the department and have them sent up at once.

Mr. NOSEWORTHY: I ask my question, because a great many people are hearing from overseas and are under the impression that the boys overseas are being unduly used; that they are being sent back time after time from the hospital; that they are being used for unduly long periods of time in the front line; and that squadrons are going into action at part strength because of the reinforcement situation. That is the information I get from citizens who are receiving letters from overseas. I would like your comment on that situation.

Mr. McNAUGHTON: The statement which I have made of the reinforcement

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

situation is that in arms other than the infantry there is no problem as far as numbers are concerned. There always is and always will be in battle, particularly in the fast-moving type of fighting in which our men in northwest Europe have been engaged during the summer, the problem of getting reinforcements promptly to the units. When a casualty occurs a demand is made on the depots and it may be some days before the man gets forward. I myself served in units during the last war, and I do not suppose we ever were fully up to strength. That condition exists in arms other than the infantry. In the infantry there have been special problems which are being met by the theatre commanders from the resources at their disposal. Generally the situation has been reasonably satisfactory. In some units, unquestionably, there have been shortages. We are trying to correct those matters as promptly as we can.

Mr. NOSEWORTHY: Earlier in the evening you referred to the extent to which you appreciate the voluntary system and its advantages over a compulsory system. Do you not think that the system of remustering which is taking place at present is imposing a considerable degree of compulsion upon men who have volunteered and is actually taking advantage of the fact that they are volunteers?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: I share the hon. member's dislike with regard to remustering from one arm of the service to another. Apart from the natural love and inclination that a man gets for his own service, there is the time of extra training and the retraining which is required. But when circumstances such as forced a remustering in this instance arise, when the battle must go on, there is no alternative.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): "Necessity" is the answer.

Mr. McNAUGHTON: Necessity is the law which governs.

Mr. CRICKSHANK: In your opinion, General McNaughton, are there sufficient reinforcements in the pools for the infantry battalions?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: I have repeated the figures several times. The numbers at present in the pools overseas, covering the whole of the infantry, are sufficient. I have spoken of the possibility of a critical position late in the month of January, and I have indicated the measures which have been taken to correct that position or to avoid its coming