

*War Appropriation*

was reached on this date in February and that they cannot do anything about it. The man is still in the army, although he was actually on the farm on March 23 when the Prime Minister announced the policy that was to apply to all men then engaged in agriculture.

Mr. RALSTON: One hesitates to deal with facts that are a little complicated; but it sounded to me as if the man, when he was called for the 1st of April, should have appeared before the board and asked for postponement on the ground that he was engaged in agriculture on March 23. He should have made his claim then. The rule is that if he does, and shows that he was wholly or partly engaged in agriculture at that time, the burden is on someone else, I suppose the army authorities or the Department of National War Services, itself, to show that he was still, even though wholly or mainly engaged in agriculture, not essential thereto. I do not know why he has not made that application. Perhaps he has. If he has not made that application and has gone into the service he may still apply to the commanding officer, who will refer the application to the board through the district officer commanding. My hon. friend refers to a particular case and I shall ascertain what has been done. This is one of those cases that would appear to bridge over the time of the zero date when men were frozen in agricultural pursuits. If the man is in the army and my hon. friend will send me his name I will endeavour to see what has been done about the matter. What the army has done is to agree to accept the recommendation of the boards which have been constituted under the National War Services Act in connection with applications of this kind, subject to military exigencies, as my hon. friend will understand.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): I wish the minister would elaborate this matter. There has been a good deal of confusion with reference to it. I do not know that his department is as much responsible as the Department of National War Services, but my time during the Easter recess was almost entirely taken up with this problem. Nearly 1,000 men in Saskatchewan were due to begin training on April 9, but were on farms on March 23. I got in touch with the Department of National War Services, as many others did, and we were told that these men should report because their call came prior to March 23 and that therefore they had to report, but that if they reported they could make application to be allowed at least to go home for spring

[Mr. Nicholson.]

seeding. Most of the men got in touch with me and I passed that advice on. I told them that they must report and then make application for leave to go home for spring seeding.

That, however, has raised another problem, and I wish the minister would make a clarifying statement either now or later in the session. As soon as it was announced that some provision was to be made to give soldiers leave for spring seeding, scores of farmers wrote asking me and, I have no doubt, other hon. members as well, what steps they should take to have their boys given leave to come home for spring seeding, and this came particularly from men up in years farming large tracts of land. I did not feel personally that I ought to take the time of the minister or of his deputy, both of whom have a great many other things to do, by referring individual cases to them. What I did was to point out to these men the procedure which their sons must follow. I told them that they should apply to the commanding officer and that the application would be forwarded to the Department of National War Services and be decided upon. In many cases that worked satisfactorily. Some of these men have been given leave to go home and put in the crop, but I am now receiving letters in which soldiers say that when they go to the commanding officer they are told that he knows nothing of such a provision; that it must be a rumour, and therefore nothing is done about it. In some cases the application is accepted reluctantly and the men hear no more about the matter. Such communications come in every day. I hesitate to take up the time of the minister with these individual cases, but the matter is pressing so far as these people are concerned.

The other day I had a letter from the secretary of a municipality giving a list of elderly men in his municipality who will not be able to put in a crop this year if they cannot get help, and they cannot get help in the surrounding communities. The boys have not been able to get leave for seeding. This is what happens. If a young man happens to belong to a unit where the commanding officer understands the situation and is sympathetic, the boy gets leave, in some cases, for six weeks. The hon. member for Témiscouata (Mr. Pouliot) mentioned a young man who had been given six months leave, but there are few such cases. On a neighbouring farm, however, there happens to be another man whose son also made application and he has never heard anything about the matter. It is difficult to explain to two farmers why one gets six weeks, or six months as the case may be, and the other no leave. I imagine the difference is in the commanding officers,