

My hon. friend will understand exactly what will happen when air training centres are closed down, and we shall have to proceed with army training centres as well. All I can say to my hon. friend is that I will take his very reasonable, and—if I may say so—very moderate, representations into consideration when coming to any decision with respect to these particular army establishments.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Under this omnibus item, there is a matter on which I should like to secure information. It has to do with the political activities and candidature for parliament or legislative assemblies of members of the armed forces. The reason why I bring this up at this time is that last evening the press carried an item to the effect that new regulations had been passed with regard to the candidature of members of the armed forces for municipal office.

Mr. RALSTON: That was municipal?

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Yes. Under P.C. 3205 of May 31, 1943, certain provisions were made whereby members of the armed forces could secure leave for the purpose either of attending nominating conventions and being nominated or of participating in election campaigns. The specific sections dealing with the matter state that a member of the armed forces may:

... subject to the exigencies of the service, be granted leave of absence by the appropriate service authorities for a period not exceeding one month preceding the election.

Leave is also granted for the purpose of attending conventions and the like. Up until the time that order in council was passed, if I understand the law correctly, no man in the armed forces was permitted to secure leave to be a candidate for parliament or a legislature. In Great Britain to-day provision is still made under the war service regulations that while members of parliament may address public meetings in their own constituencies, they are not allowed to speak outside their own constituencies during an election campaign. I can very well understand that when an election, either provincial or federal, occurs, quite a number of men and women serving in the armed forces may be desirous of knowing their rights and what opportunities will be accorded them to attend nominating conventions and to be nominated. I have no doubt that there will be members of the armed forces overseas who will be desirous of returning to Canada to participate in election campaigns should they receive the nomination in a constituency.

[Mr. Ralston.]

The questions I would ask in regard to this order in council are these: Is provision made whereby application for leave by a man in the armed forces and desirous of becoming a candidate for parliament is entirely restricted to application through the regular military authorities, or will the minister himself exercise a supervisory position in regard to such applications for leave to participate as a candidate in an election campaign?

Second, have any applications as yet been made by members of the armed forces overseas for leave to return to Canada to participate in an election, and have any members of the armed forces been returned to Canada to permit them to participate in an election as candidates?

Finally, what is the attitude of the government in regard to the rights of members of parliament who are in uniform and in the service to address public meetings outside their own constituencies?

This order in council provides an opportunity which I think should be provided for men in the armed forces to serve not only in the armed forces but also in the parliament and legislatures of the country. It is a matter of interest to know that in this parliament there is a greater number of ex-service men, according to the information I have, than in any other parliament since the last war, and I know there are numbers of men overseas who might very well be expected to become candidates if the regulations were clarified. According to the order in council as it now stands, leave can only be granted depending upon the exigencies of the service. Some provision should be made whereby a man in the service who is nominated for parliament should have an opportunity to participate in an election campaign, with the procedure being an appeal direct to the minister himself. I would ask the minister to make a statement in regard to this order in council and to answer the questions I have asked.

Mr. RALSTON: In reply to the first question, as to whether provision for application for leave is restricted to the military authorities or whether the minister exercises a supervisory jurisdiction, no ruling has been given in that connection. As the order in council stands, the application would come in the regular way to the military authorities. If the case is of some importance I would think it quite possible that it would be referred to national defence headquarters, and quite possibly to the minister. I would not want to give an undertaking at this stage that the minister would exercise any greater super-