

War Appropriation

they arrived at the \$1.30 and the \$35 a month, on what standard it was based; that would be the first thing in deciding whether or not there should be an increase. Perhaps before the minister is finished with the committee he could give some further information on that point.

Mr. RALSTON: All I can say is that both the pay and the allowances were the subject of study by a committee supposed to be familiar with the matter, from the point of view not only of finance but of the services as well and some outside agencies, and the regulations were just completed, as I remember, shortly before the war broke out. The basis on which the differences were arrived at I am not in a position to say. But I understood my friend to say that the Minister of Finance last November intimated that the cost of living bonus for dependents was under consideration. I think the Minister of Finance is of opinion that the result of that consideration was given when he announced the appointment of the dependents' allowance board of trustees and the special provisions there. I have indicated that those questions are never closed as far as consideration is concerned, and it is I who am saying that matter is under consideration in view of representations made. However, this consideration is not a continuation of the consideration given by the Minister of Finance. I think he considered it was dealt with when the conclusion was arrived at which he announced on that occasion.

Mr. WHITE: Would the minister care to give his own opinion on the question of increased allowance and cost of living bonus? Would he tell us what he thinks as an old soldier?

Mr. RALSTON: I am afraid I would not care to. My hon. friend will understand it is a government matter.

Mr. WHITE: But I have heard the minister speak about his own old battalion. Would he not tell us his views as an old soldier?

Mr. RALSTON: I am not going to give any opinions without prejudice to-night.

The hon. member for Victoria (Mr. Mayhew) mentioned several matters in regard to the Pacific coast. I think I have said all I can about that. I appreciate his remarks about my having been out there. I certainly felt that the trip was worth while from the point of view of learning more of the job, as well as meeting many citizens whom it was a pleasure to meet and from whom I got a great deal of information and, if I may say

[Mr. White.]

so, some advice. My hon. friend intimated that I was satisfied. Perhaps he did me an injustice there. I did not say I was satisfied; I said the situation was better than I expected, but not as good as I desired. A good deal has been done since that time as to plans for the defence of the Pacific coast. The statement made here to-night, particularly with regard to anti-aircraft protection, brings to my mind that a great deal has been done and is being done in that respect, quite apart from the disposition of large numbers of troops at what we regard as strategic points.

The hon. member mentioned the reserve army. I appreciate what he as an employer says about the interest employers are taking in that organization. Without them it cannot succeed; with them it can be made a great success. I do not know of any employer who sets a better example than my hon. friend, if he will permit me to say so, in the way of interest in matters of that kind.

He has spoken about having the attendance at camps staggered. He did not use that expression, but he suggested that we have it so that all men who are employees in one industry would not have to go at one time. That is a matter now under study by the district officers commanding; it has to be arranged by them, and I shall see that General Alexander has his attention called to it from headquarters, as no doubt it has been by those who are interested in the reserve units out there. I am sure some way could be arranged so that the largest possible number of men can be got to camp.

With regard to voluntary groups and the organization on the Pacific coast the hon. member embarks on another field. I want to repeat what I said earlier in the evening, that the Department of National Defence can only take on so much. I do not want to evade responsibility. There may be some responsibility on the government, particularly in connection with the matter of fire fighting battalions to which the hon. member gave most attention. That matter is under consideration at the present time; but it is not the Department of National Defence that has to do with it; it is a civilian undertaking, and must be done, I think, under civilian auspices. Without attempting to "pass the buck," I know the Minister of Pensions and National Health has the matter actively under consideration in connection with air raid precautions.

With respect to the unification or coordination of civilian efforts on the Pacific coast, there again it is a matter for civilian authorities and not the military, although I tried to do my share by seeing that General Alexander