

Canadian Forces Act

experience of most officers in the last war and in the first war was that if you took an officer out of your unit and gave him a special job to do you usually selected an officer who was not the best in your unit. As a matter of fact you usually took some officer who was the poorest qualified in the unit and was not much good for anything else. I think everyone will bear me out in that statement. It would be very unfair to the men to place their entertainment in the hands of an inferior officer of the unit. I also think the choosing of such an officer would cause considerable difficulty in the unit. I feel that the department is making a great mistake in not utilizing the services of these four splendid organizations.

From reading press reports and so on we realize that the providing of entertainment in Korea would be more difficult than it was in France in the first war and in the other theatres of war during the second war, but in my opinion the greater the difficulty the greater the challenge to the department and to these organizations. We have read about these men spending most of their time in the bleak hill region of Korea. When they come out for a few days' rest it is to some destroyed Korean village where there are no buildings for entertainment purposes and no entertainment of any kind. I say that is a challenge to the defence department, and it would be a challenge to these organizations, if they were sent there, to see that these men receive entertainment under these most trying conditions.

I should like to ask the parliamentary assistant if there have not been requests for the services of these organizations from the senior officers serving in the Canadian forces in Korea. I would be very much surprised if there had not.

Mr. J. A. Ross (Souris): I should like to say a word about the lack of auxiliary services in Korea. For many months we have been reading stories in the press to the effect that the Legion, the Knights of Columbus, the Salvation Army, the Y.M.C.A. and other auxiliary services have made voluntary offers to the Department of National Defence. As has been pointed out, we know what splendid service they rendered in the first two world wars. It may be that conditions are somewhat different in Korea. The parliamentary assistant has repeatedly referred to the terrain and the different situation there. The hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) read into the record this afternoon copies of the correspondence containing these

voluntary offers from the various organizations and the replies of the minister. The minister's reasons certainly did not impress me very much.

As was pointed out by my leader this afternoon, the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton), in answer to a question put by the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) on May 31, said that if the services provided by the United States, Great Britain and others were not satisfactory Canada would be willing to provide them. However, nothing has been done. Canadian personnel have been returning from Korea within the last few days and they have borne out to quite an extent the press reports and the present dissatisfaction of many members of the forces there because of lack of provision for their material and spiritual welfare.

Our Korean force is made up of young civilians who are going through very difficult and trying times, and we are now to have an army of occupation in Europe. I think it is most essential that these voluntary offers should be accepted not only with respect to Korea but for the benefit of the 27th brigade in Europe. I cannot say just how much it means to the moral uplift of these chaps, who find it very lonely. As my leader pointed out, Christmas is approaching and these young people are away from their loved ones. They are undergoing trying and difficult conditions. The provision of these auxiliary services by those who have been trained to do this kind of work can do a great deal to assist in making it easier for our troops who are in strange lands and doing a great job on our behalf.

I have found it difficult to follow the reasoning of the Minister of National Defence whenever we have discussed these offers in the house. I am sure it is the wish of the civilian population that these voluntary offers of service be taken advantage of, and if the parliamentary assistant cannot impress that upon the minister and the department, then I think there is a lot of merit in the suggestion made by the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra (Mr. Green) this afternoon that an independent committee should be appointed to survey the situation and make a report. It should be a committee wholly apart from the Department of National Defence, one which would make a truly independent report to the government on this situation and whether it would be feasible to accept the voluntary offers so generously made by organizations that have proven their worth so well in two great world wars. I think it is most important that something of this sort should be done to preserve and develop the morale of these men who are doing so