

CANADIAN FORCES

AGRICULTURAL LEAVE—QUESTION OF FURTHER
EXTENSION

On the orders of the day:

Mr. GORDON GRAYDON (Leader of the Opposition): May I ask the Minister of National Defence a question respecting seeding leave for the armed forces. As the minister knows, seeding operations in Canada have been delayed because of the weather to the extent that farmers have not had a similar experience in several decades. I know that in the various military districts seeding leave has been granted to a great many soldiers. May I ask the minister, first, what was the normal or average period of leave granted to men in the armed forces to enable them to engage in spring seeding operations this year; second, is the minister giving consideration to the extension of this period of leave, in view of the fact that some farmers may find that leave will be over before they can get on the land?

Hon. J. L. RALSTON (Minister of National Defence): The normal period for which leave was granted was, on the average, six weeks. With regard to requests for further extension, I am advised that, except in the case of one particular formation, there have been practically no requests. I may say that in that particular formation the general officer commanding has been instructed to use his discretion, having regard to the military situation and to the merits of the case, and I propose to give instructions that the same consideration be extended in connection with any other applications which are made where the circumstances are such that the seeding operations have been seriously interfered with on account of weather, and the applicant has not been able to utilize the full six weeks of leave granted.

INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

PROCEDURE IN QUESTIONS ASKED ON THE
ORDERS OF THE DAY

On the orders of the day:

Mr. S. H. KNOWLES (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Minister of Labour a question, notice of which I sent him yesterday? Has the government reached a decision—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order. Hon. members have been asking whether the government has reached decisions concerning different matters and whether it has decided upon a particular policy. I must direct the attention of the house to the form of questions that are being asked on the orders of the day. These

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

questions are out of order. In view of the urgency of certain questions, however, for example with regard to seed potatoes and matters of the kind, I have allowed them; but I must once again point out that there are only certain questions that can legitimately be asked on the orders of the day, and certainly questions concerning government policy are not among them. Some hon. members seem to have taken the position that the mere giving of notice of questions to a minister is sufficient to justify these questions and to bring them within the rules of the house. That is not so. Hon. members may ask only such questions as are of immediate urgency and such as ministers may reply to in accordance with the rules; but simply to give notice of a question which may not properly be asked under the rules does not justify it.

Mr. KNOWLES: The question which I was anxious to direct to the Minister of Labour had to do with the status of dominion and provincial minimum wage rates. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, whether a statement in that regard is permissible.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is hardly a question that can be asked on the orders of the day and certainly it should not be put. I must point out further that a practice is coming into vogue in the house of putting supplementary questions to elicit answers in addition to those given by ministers. If the rules permitted it, that would be entirely proper; but the rules do not permit of supplementary questions being asked. I have allowed a number of these questions where explanations or statements by ministers might reasonably be requested, in circumstances where the minister would no doubt wish to have his remarks made as clear as possible. But I must point out that the rule is as I have stated.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WAR APPROPRIATION BILL—PROCEDURE IN
DISCUSSION IN COMMITTEE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. GORDON GRAYDON (Leader of the Opposition): I wish to make one request of the Prime Minister and of the government, if I may. We are now proceeding with the war appropriation bill in committee. I am not sure what the procedure will be with respect to calling in sequence the various departments in committee, but two of the departments have now been called, that of national defence as related to the army and national defence for air, the minister in charge