

*Reinforcements*

Mr. McNAUGHTON: I can only give the hon. member an approximate date from memory because I have not kept a diary of it. I would think from memory, subject to correction, that it must have been about the last day of October.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: About that time was the first occasion on which the minister had advised the Prime Minister—

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: May I say to my hon. friend that I think the minister could give that information best by reference to the day on which he was made minister. The minister was sworn in on Thursday the 2nd of November.

Mr. McNAUGHTON: Yes. I see I have a note in this little diary. The conversation took place on Tuesday, October 31.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Did the minister at the time he gave that opinion have a full statistical record regarding the enlistments and the difficulties of getting men from the N.R.M.A. men in general as experienced by the department?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: The answer to that question is, no.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: I am asking these questions for the purpose of getting information. What change in attitude, what degree of different types of persuasion did the minister decide to use on the N.R.M.A. men that had never been used before? I mention in that connection the fact that the minister was quoted in the press as using words to this effect, that improper means or unjustifiable means had been used but that that course was to be departed from. What innovation or improvements did the minister suggest could be used on the N.R.M.A. men in order to induce them to enlist?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: I would say to the hon. member that I had seen a fair amount of what was going on in various parts of Canada, and I had formed the definite opinion that these men who were in the N.R.M.A. units had been pressed rather than led. It seemed an attitude of mind which had grown up towards them in all quarters. I heard it on all sides. From the earliest days when I was called upon to study these matters for the last war, to study, report and recommend what should be the basis of our military organization for the future, I had formed the definite opinion that in this country we should rely on the voluntary system. It struck me that these people had been put into the camps and that they were certainly not being encouraged to come forward the way I would like

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

if I were the one responsible for them, and I felt myself emphatically that in an appeal to them, pointing out the part that they could play, we would have a considerable measure of success in persuading them to volunteer for general service, or, as I have put it on more than one occasion, to take up voluntarily the honourable obligation of service.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: That is far from an answer to what I had in mind. What were the coercive actions that you objected to? That is far away from an answer to that question.

Mr. McNAUGHTON: The hon. member will forgive me if I do not agree. These matters of opinion and judgment are hardly susceptible of categorical answers in detail.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: The question that I asked was this: What were the coercive actions that had been practised on these men that the minister decided were not going to be continued any more? What were those practices? I ask this only to ascertain what change has taken place.

Mr. McNAUGHTON: If the hon. member will give me a few minutes I shall have the memorandum looked up.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: While the minister is having that information looked up, will he tell me if, as a result of his examination or knowledge gained in various parts of Canada, he has come to the conclusion that coercion has been used on the draftees who were actually in the forces?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: Since I came back to Canada I have been in the position of an onlooker and I have had very little opportunity to see the men except when they were out of their camps. The impression I have formed is that with leadership and persuasion and appeal these men will come forward.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Did the minister conclude that there had not been leadership before?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: I would answer "No" to that question.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: What changes has the minister made since he became minister with a view to securing the enlistment of the N.R.M.A. men?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: I covered this matter in considerable detail in the address which I had the honour to make to the house to-day. As I said then, this group had been held together for a multiplicity of purposes. Some of them had been trained as soldiers and others had been fully or partly trained to be moved around the country from time to time