

Mr. GRAYDON: In this item there is a substantial amount set aside for the food requirements of the army. Would the minister give us some general statement as to the catering arrangements with respect to the army, whether catering is handled locally, whether it is done in a general way by some central arrangement, or how it is dealt with?

Mr. RALSTON: I am afraid there will be some hiatuses in my recital. The food is requisitioned by the district officers commanding the particular camps for which it is required. These requisitions come in here and are gone over at national defence headquarters, and what we call a contract demand is signed and sent over to the Department of Munitions and Supply. Munitions and supply put these demands together, not only for the army but also for the naval and air services, and purchase in quantities goods for delivery at certain points, at certain supply depots. The supply depots, of course, are all known to the supply authorities. There are supply depots in the districts, and in turn in the camps those supply depots are provided from the central depots. Sometimes all in-shippments are made direct to the supply depots and not to the district at all, and we have a supply officer there who issues to the units on the basis of the parade state the rations required for the particular day. If a unit is isolated, it probably has some storage facilities, so that it may have rations for two or three days in reserve.

From then on, the rations, of course, go to the unit quartermaster and from him to the sergeant cook, and by the sergeant cook are prepared for the men.

Speaking of the messing, I believe it has improved greatly. These are days of specialization. As the committee knows, we have a messing officer, Colonel R. H. Webb, who has been in charge of that matter. He has succeeded in impressing us with the fact that his branch is important, and the result has been that we have appointed messing officers in the various districts whose job it is to see to it not only that the food is provided but that it is put up in proper shape.

I would think that one of the chief arguments among these messing experts in reference to the preparation and serving of food is whether or not the so-called orderly system or the cafeteria system is to be used. I have heard both views expressed in camps; I myself am not in a position to express an opinion.

[Mr. Ralston.]

A good deal has been said about waste in camps. As is known, one of the jobs of the messing officers is to see to it that every possible care is taken to use all usable food. Contracts are made for garbage, and what cannot be used in any way is destroyed in the incinerators.

That is a very rough and ready survey of the food situation, but it begins with the requisition and ends up with the men at the table.

Mr. PERLEY: As regards a camp like Dundurn, would a contract for beef be let by the year?

Mr. RALSTON: It might not be. It might be a contract let by the Department of Munitions and Supply to the supplier for a supply of so much beef to the camps in a certain area. Then the Department of Munitions and Supply would direct that so many hundredweight of beef be sent each day to Dundurn; or it might be supplied direct to Regina and forwarded from there. But I would think Dundurn would be supplied direct by the contractor.

Mr. GRAYDON: Of course, contracts for supplies of food are wholly in the purview of the Department of Munitions and Supply.

Mr. RALSTON: Yes, and they are generally made on a three months' basis, or something like that.

Mr. ADAMSON: Since the director-general of medical services is here, could the minister give us the figures for rejects in the army? I know these have already been given, but can they be broken down into causes of rejection, whether rejected for pulmonary reasons, skin disease, heart trouble, rupture, flat feet, mental causes, or for whatever reason? I know all that information is available, and I believe it would be of interest to the committee to have it.

Mr. RALSTON: I do not want to have my hon. friend get us off on that if I can avoid it. I have a proposition to make to the committee with regard to general matters of that kind. I suggest with deference that the inquiry does not come quite within the purview of this item, but if my hon. friend thinks it does, I will stop.

Several questions have been asked, the answers to which I have not brought down yet, on items which we have passed. I suggest that in connection with the item for departmental administration we deal with any matters of that kind if they are not within the item we are discussing and if there is something about which questions have been asked. I do not