

I believe to be of the utmost importance. As I said before, the training centre at Maple Creek has been closed down, and the one at Prince Albert is not being used to any great extent. At the same time the suggestion has been made that the vocational training centre in Saskatoon should be moved to Prince Albert. I would ask the minister to give this matter careful consideration before this step is finally taken. I would ask, too, that not only questions of cost and efficiency be considered, although I agree that if cost is very much different, and if efficiency could be greatly improved the possibility of changing would have to be considered.

I would ask the minister, however, to consider the matter from this point of view. It is all very well to close down some of these centres, but I do not think this should be done if there are other types of work which could be done at those points. If the minister takes a vocational centre from one city and moves it to another, there will be a great deal of consternation among the people in the locality from which the training centre is being moved. I know that, because I feel this matter personally. As soon as a move like this is noised around, immediately the civilians in the particular locality have the impression—and I am not saying they are justified—that there is something more than military expediency behind such a move. I have heard the rumour, and understand there is substantial belief as to its accuracy, that a move is contemplated. I suggest that the minister and his department should consider the matter carefully, when it comes to cutting out a training centre in any particular locality, and moving it to another.

Mr. RALSTON: Was the hon. member referring to Calgary?

Mr. BENCE: No; Saskatoon. I am talking about the suggested move of the vocational training centre from Saskatoon to Prince Albert. I will be frank to say, as I have said to the minister privately, that this affects me. It is suggested that the training centre be moved from Saskatoon, represented in the house by a member in the opposition, to a constituency represented by a member of the government—in this particular instance by the leader of the government. The feeling develops in the constituency that there is some reason other than that of military expediency, and it is suggested that the situation should be examined very carefully before any move is made. It is pointed out that if a move must be made because of military necessities it should be made clear what the reasons are.

Would the minister give the committee a statement covering the set-up of these training centres across Canada, and the policy that is to be laid down with respect to the matter of closing them down, and switching them from one city, or from one particular part of Canada to another, and particularly in connection with the matter of recruiting in various parts of Canada?

It does seem to me that we should consider the methods that must necessarily be used in the building of civilian morale, not only for the purpose of raising funds necessary to carry on the war, but also for the purpose of obtaining the necessary recruits.

Mr. RALSTON: I have not before me the information with respect to the three locations to which my hon. friend has referred. I would refer him only to this, that basic training centres have been closed at thirteen different locations in Canada. Naturally someone's constituency has to be hit—and I say that seriously. I know of one hon. member in whose constituency there were two training centres, both of which have been closed.

No decision has been arrived at with respect to the training centres to which my hon. friend has referred. Possibly I am remiss in my duty, but I had not heard, until my hon. friend brought it to my attention, of the suggestion of moving the vocational training centre from Saskatoon. I know that the Prince Albert and Maple Creek training centres were established at the time of a peak load. A good many men have gone through those centres, and as a result of a reduction in intake there is less need for training centre capacity in Saskatchewan. As my hon. friend knows, the centre at Regina was closed some time ago. At Regina they had a training establishment and a district depot.

As I said, there have been thirteen cases in which training centres have been closed. Some of them are used for other purposes. In addition to that, there are eleven cases in which training centre capacity has been reduced. All I can say to my hon. friend is that the matter will be studied. I am just as aware as he is of the suggestion which would be made if a training centre were changed from Saskatoon to Prince Albert. Someone would suggest that it was done for other than military purposes. Although my hon. friend may not believe it, that would make the departmental officers concerned lean back in their efforts to avoid a move of that kind. However, I think military considerations must dominate, regardless of the effect in any particular constituency.