

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

CLOSING OF ARMY CAMPS—SERVICE PERSONNEL
ON MAINTENANCE WORK

On the orders of the day:

Mr. CLARENCE GILLIS (Cape Breton South): May I be permitted to direct a question to the Minister of National Defence (Army) arising out of a telegram I received this morning. I sent a copy of it to the minister and therefore I will not quote it. It has reference to the closing out of army camps across Canada. Service personnel doing maintenance work and living in camp or barracks with their families are now being evicted, and in the section to which the telegram refers there is no available living space. These people are not able to get quarters. Can the minister inform the house what the government's policy or attitude is in a matter of this kind?

Hon. DOUGLAS ABBOTT (Minister of National Defence for Naval Services): As my hon. friend has stated, he was good enough to send me a copy of the telegram. I do not know the particular area to which he refers or the particular camp he has in mind, but the general policy is that in the case of rented premises watchmen are retained until such time as the premises are returned to the lessor. In the case of premises owned by the government, or premises constructed on leased land, watchmen or maintenance people are retained until such time as the premises are turned over to another government department or declared surplus and turned over under the Surplus Crown Assets Act to be disposed of by the war assets corporation. It is clear, I think, that it would not be possible for the Department of National Defence to retain the services of watchmen or to continue to provide accommodation for them after the particular premises have ceased to be administered by the Department of National Defence. If my hon. friend will give me the particular case he has in mind I will look into the circumstances, but that is the general policy so far as army premises are concerned.

Mr. GILLIS: It is in Sydney, Nova Scotia, the Royal Avenue barracks. Four families are affected.

DISCHARGE OR RELEASE OF PERSONNEL DESIROUS OF
ATTENDING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. T. A. KIDD (Kingston City): May I direct a question to the Minister of National Defence? Will the minister kindly inform the house whether steps can be taken to speed

up the discharge or release from the service of members of the armed forces whose applications for discharge have been made, in order that they may attend or reenter university or other educational institutions? The matter is urgent in view of the shortness of time within which they must register at the university.

Hon. DOUGLAS ABBOTT (Minister of National Defence for Naval Services): I do not know whether anything can be done to speed up the existing procedure. As my hon. friend the member for Kingston City knows, the policy was announced a week or ten days ago whereby university students can obtain discharge from the army upon producing evidence that they have been accepted for the university or other educational institution which they propose to attend, and upon making application and producing that evidence they will be discharged immediately, subject always to the general conditions that, if they are performing some work in which it is essential that they should be retained for a short time, the application might have to be refused. I know of no case in which discharge has been refused. That policy has been in force only a week or ten days, and I am advised that it is operating fairly satisfactorily.

Mr. KIDD: Does this apply in the same way to the forces of the Pacific command now in training at Fort Benning, Georgia?

Mr. ABBOTT: These instructions have gone out to all commands.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: By leave of the house, will the minister allow a supplementary question? Does this rule apply to service personnel who desire to enter collegiates, intermediate schools? The reason I ask the question is that a number have been refused discharge who desire to enter collegiate rather than university.

Mr. ABBOTT: My hon. friend refers to collegiates. We have not that expression in my own province. I may say that it does not apply to high schools. The ruling is university or equivalent educational institution, which would be a technical school. It contemplates higher education as distinct from secondary schools.

NATIONAL WAR SERVICES

INQUIRY AS TO ABOLITION OF DEPARTMENT

On the orders of the day:

Mr. E. G. HANSELL (MacLeod): I would ask the Prime Minister to clarify the situation respecting the Department of National