

was awarded a distinction, and when I wear the ribbon on my uniform I do so in the full knowledge that that award was made every bit as much for the courage, determination and devotion of those French-speaking soldiers as for any action which I carried out myself.

At a more recent date, in 1943, it was my privilege to see the Regiment de Hull, which came from this immediate area, standing for hours in the waters of the Bering sea, unloading stores from the boats on to the island of Kiska; and on armistice day, in November, 1943, I spent that day in the tents of the Regiment de Hull. There was an arctic blizzard blowing and the instruments registered that gale as blowing at ninety miles an hour. One could hardly stand up against it. The freezing sleet would blow horizontally to the ground, and I say here, and nobody who was on that island could contradict me, that those French-Canadian soldiers of the Regiment de Hull were the life and soul of that garrison, be they Canadian or United States soldiers who were there.

Therefore when those French-Canadian soldiers who had been called up under the N.R.M.A. were appealed to last year to volunteer many of them had to wrestle between two loyalties, one loyalty that might be described as parental loyalty, a loyalty to their home and to their family, as against a loyalty to a cause which they barely understood. With regard to the decision to be made whether they should go back on promises they had made when they were first called up, promises to their parents that they would not volunteer for service outside Canada, whether that decision should be made by them or by the government, they were unanimous in feeling that the decision should be made by the government and not by the individual man. No wonder those men placed the responsibility squarely upon the shoulders of the government. This man-power skeleton will remain long in the Liberal cupboard.

I suggest that even at this eleventh hour, in the interests of efficiency, for the well-being of the N.R.M.A. soldiers who are still here and for the sake of the unity of Canada, this two-army system be discontinued from now on.

Our soldiers are returning, but I suggest that the methods by which they are being repatriated are open to the severest condemnation because those men who have had the longest and hardest service, as the minister said to-day, are not having a fair chance in being returned; that men who have served a much shorter time overseas are now coming back, while many of the men who have had

the longest service still have to remain, not because they are in some particularly essential job, but because they do not happen to be in a formation which is being brought back, and because only lip-service is being given to this policy of "first in, first out; longest and hardest, first home."

The point system as described by the minister to-day is totally unjust to the man who has seen the longest and hardest fighting. Two points are allowed for service in Canada and only one additional point for service overseas. "Service overseas" does not mean overseas in a theatre of operation; it may mean service in a pleasant camp in England. The present point system should be revised immediately if fairness and justice are to be observed. That is very much the feeling of the men who are returning to Canada to-day. I have talked with men who have been repatriated to Ottawa with the Princess Louise Dragoon Guards, with men of the Hastings and Prince Edward regiment from Belleville, with men of the 48th battalion being demobilized in Toronto, and with men of the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada who passed through here a week ago on their way to Vancouver. These men who served with me in the first Canadian division in the early days of the war, some of whom I could recognize, many of whom were able to recognize me, were all loud in their protests against the unfair way in which the present point system is working, and the fact that included in their ranks were men who had seen no fighting whatever. In the last session, the Minister of National Defence gave the information that by the 1st of March of this year, three and a half months before V-E day, only 238 N.R.M.A. soldiers had reached an actual battlefield. We hear now that a hundred and eleven thousand of our men have been repatriated. A return was tabled yesterday which gave some startling figures regarding the type of men who were in those units which are now being repatriated. I jotted down a few. Of the Saskatchewan Light Infantry twenty-seven per cent are N.R.M.A. soldiers; of the Seaforths, 19.5 per cent; of the P.P.C.L.I., 18.5 per cent, and, with all but two of the infantry battalions which are back, more than ten per cent are N.R.M.A. soldiers. Compare those figures with the statement which was given by the minister last session, that by the 1st of March of this year only 238 N.R.M.A. men had reached the actual battlefield. Also compare that with the figures which were given earlier, which I mentioned, that there were over four thousand men in the army of occupation who had served for more than six months in an actual theatre of war.

[Mr. Pearkes.]