

*Reinforcements*

were laid down and practised in the training centre, he would be given more training before being sent forward.

Mr. GREEN: In the average case that boy would get six weeks of training?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: He would get six weeks as a minimum.

Mr. GREEN: What would be the average; six and a half weeks?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: Somewhere perhaps between six and seven, talking in averages.

Mr. GREEN: Supposing that boy had been given only two months of training in artillery; then how long would he get before being put into the line?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: I have been asked as to a condition that could not arise, because he has all the training here behind him.

Mr. GREEN: That is what you think, but a great many of them have not. Supposing he is an army service corps man; then how long will he get?

Mr. McNAUGHTON: That remustering course of which I spoke, which as a minimum runs to six weeks, is a standard which has been laid down for all remustering, and that is a minimum. Then the persons who are in charge of these units and responsible for seeing that the soldier is up to the standard will be required to check the training of the men in every subject laid down for them. It is their duty to ensure that before a man is passed out on remustering, he has reached the standard required, and I have no reason to doubt in any way that the mechanism is working satisfactorily. Like all mechanisms which deal with large numbers of men there will be occasions when individuals who are not up to standard physically, or not up to this, that and the other thing, will get through. We rely most of all on the final check; that is, where the man goes into the "left out of battle" part of his own units.

I take a chance on security, if there is a security question involved, but I do not believe there is. I wish to read a letter dated October 28 sent to all commanders in the field. It deals with the question of absorption of reinforcement personnel and is as follows:

1. Occasionally I have had instances reported to me purporting to prove that the training of reinforcement officers and soldiers on joining their units in the field, has been wrong, or inadequate. I am satisfied that most of the officers now responsible for training and testing remustered personnel, or drafts arriving from Canada, are officers who have had considerable infantry fighting experience in this war, know what is required and all are conscientious in

[Mr. McNaughton.]

their duty. I have discussed this problem with some commanding officers and senior formation commanders and I believe that the way in which reinforcements are posted within units has much to do with their unsatisfactory performance in cases where they have fallen short of expectations. I do not believe that commanding officers have given enough consideration to the human aspects of the problem.

2. Commanders and commanding officers must realize that when the reinforcement officer or soldier joins the unit with which he is going to fight, it is one of great moments in his life—comparable with birth, marriage or death. The position of a new reinforcement joining a unit is quite different from that of a soldier who has served with a unit for a considerable time and goes into battle beside officers and N.C.O.'s who have trained him and with men whom he knows. The reinforcement (unless he is a recovered casualty returned to his own unit) comes as a stranger. Regardless of how thorough his preliminary training may be, in the stress of his first battle, he may react in a way contrary to his training unless steps have been taken to win his confidence. It is well known, and only human, that the experienced fighting soldier is inclined to "lay it on a bit thick" in describing his battle experiences to the new arrival. This adds to the tension under which the inexperienced soldier goes into his first engagement. He may do things in the stress of the moment which afterwards he may well realize were contrary to what he had been taught.

3. Unless proper steps are taken within a unit, the reinforcement officer, or soldier, goes into action as an individual rather than as a member of a unit team.

4. Commanding officers will take steps to ensure that their unit arrangements for the reception and absorption of reinforcement officers' and soldiers are properly organized. Reinforcement personnel arriving at a unit must:

(a) be made to feel that they are part of the unit and no longer just individuals. A responsible officer who has served with the unit for some time must interview them and explain the practical side of soldiering in the field and make the new arrival feel that he belongs there. If this matter is properly handled, confidence is won from the outset and each man feels that he has become part of a unit which takes an interest in him.

(b) have a final check over of their individual weapon training and be given a few talks from experienced officers and N.C.O.'s, on practical pointers.

(c) be given time to adjust themselves to their new surroundings before they are faced with action itself.

5. I have previously issued instructions that every infantry battalion and armoured regiment shall have a strong "left out of battle" party, including 2IC's and selected officers, N.C.O.'s and men. From this "left out of battle" party can be formed the "unit reception school" to deal with arriving reinforcements. If properly organized within the unit, this party should be able to provide just the type of officer and N.C.O. needed to test and initiate the new soldier. I am satisfied that the means to handle this problem are there, if there is proper organization within the unit.

6. Except in extreme emergency, i.e., when it is a question of winning, or losing, a battle, reinforcements will NOT be posted into fighting