

Supply—National Defence

repairing certain equipment. In a considerable number of places those facilities do exist, and I think some units could do with more equipment than they have been issued, particularly weapons.

Mr. Claxton: I would be very glad to follow up the suggestion the hon. member has made. It happens that in the autumn of 1949, at the beginning of the training period, either the chief of the general staff, one of the senior officers at defence headquarters or myself attended meetings of all the reserve associations of the army reserve forces. One of the questions we put to them was, "Are you satisfied as regards equipment?" No one suggested that he was not. I think I have read all the resolutions of the twelve associations, and I do not believe that a single one of them deals with the problem of equipment. I have been assured there is no shortage for the reserve forces, but I shall be glad to follow up the hon. member's suggestion.

Mr. Harkness: I am not suggesting there is any shortage. I believe this equipment is here, particularly the items I mentioned, the heavy ack-ack guns and the S. P. guns. We have them here, but they are not out in the hands of the different units that could use them.

Mr. Fulton: While we are on the subject of the reserve army, I should like to follow that up with the minister for a moment or two. I want to speak about the number of men who go to camp, because it is very difficult for a reserve unit to do any tactical training, which is perhaps the most important kind of training, when it only has a small number of men at camp.

I was speaking to a member of a reserve unit just now, and he tells me that in some cases they have to make up composite companies for schemes with a platoon from here and a platoon from there. That is not satisfactory training at all. He told me the difficulty is that in most cases the men are willing to go but it is not convenient for their employer to let them go at the time the camp is being held. I know this matter has been discussed previously and I do not want to go into it again in any detail. I should like the minister to say, if he can, what progress is being made in encouraging employers to make it possible for their employees to go to camp, and to compare the percentage which went to camp this year of the total strength of the reserve army, which worked out to 22 per cent, with the percentage which went to camp last year and to say whether there is any improvement in this matter or not.

Mr. Claxton: With regard to the efforts made, to persuade employers to allow reserve personnel to go to camp, I think we have had great success. Appeals to employers: not only have these been made through their associations like the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Manufacturers Association and so on, with which I have corresponded directly, which have been most co-operative, some of which have passed resolutions urging their member organizations to do this. Also for the third consecutive year I have addressed a letter personally to all leading employers in Canada asking them to support the reserve army. This year we sent out some 3,300 such letters and there has been only one unfavourable reply. The support is very good indeed. However, many concerns such as, for example, the steel companies which have round-the-clock operations, find it difficult to make the adjustments necessary to permit men to go to camps who want to go. The figure of 10,000 represents a substantial increase over last year. It meets to a considerable degree our objective in that it consists largely of officers and N.C.O.'s. The figure for last year was 7,092.

Mr. Fulton: What was the percentage of the strength that figure represented?

Mr. Claxton: That was against 38,000. This year it is 10,000 out of 44,000. It seems to be about the same or a little better. The type of training at these camps, as I think everyone recognizes, is different in character to what it was before the war. The administration is done entirely by the camp administrative staff. The men arrive and spend their full time at camp in intensive training in much the same way as they would do if they were attending a corps school. I think those who saw the demonstration at Petawawa last week can appreciate that it would form part of a good training. Also, where it is possible, units are encouraged to drive up with their own equipment, and some of them have driven up with their own guns. We plan to fly a considerable part of reserve personnel to camp so as to save their time. I must say the response from the men themselves is most encouraging. I go to as many camps as I can, and I find that they are enthusiastic. They have to be, in order to give up their own time, as many of them do. But they are doing a great service and we are doing everything possible to encourage them.

Mr. George: I am sorry that I missed part of this discussion, owing to the fact that I had to attend a meeting of another committee. From what I have heard since I came in, however, I am led to believe that there is a