

Major Connie Smythe, M.C.* who was convalescing in Christie Street Military Hospital (Toronto) from a wound received in France while commanding the 30th L.A.A. Battery, R.C.A. He charged that the reinforcements being sent overseas were "green, inexperienced and poorly trained" and that the result was unnecessary casualties. An Editorial in The Ottawa Journal of 20 Sep gave Major Smythe's statement in part:

During my time in France and in the hospitals of France and England, I talked with officers from far eastern Canada, French Canada, Ontario and all the western provinces. They agreed that the reinforcements received now are green, inexperienced and poorly trained.

Besides this general statement, specific charges are that many have never thrown a grenade. Practically all have little or no knowledge of the Bren gun and, finally, most of them have never seen a Piat anti-tank gun, let alone fired one.**

These officers are unanimous in stating that large numbers of unnecessary casualties result from this greenness, both to the rookie and to the older soldiers, who have the added task of trying to look after the newcomers as well as themselves.

I give these true facts in the hopes that:

- (1) Col. Ralston, if he has other information will know that his facts are out of date or that he has been misinformed;
- (2) The taxpayer will insist that no money will be spent on well-trained soldiers in this country except to send them to the battlefronts;
- (3) The people who voted these men should be used overseas should insist on the Government carrying out the will of the people; and
- (4) The relatives of the lads in the fighting zones should ensure no further casualties are caused to their own flesh and blood by the failure to send overseas reinforcements now available in large numbers in Canada.

*A well known Canadian figure in the world of sport—manager of the Toronto Maple Leafs Hockey Club and promoter of Maple Leaf Gardens, he had served in the Canadian Field Artillery and Royal Flying Corps during the First World War and mobilized a so-called "Sportmen's Battery" in 1942.

**It should be obvious to those who have read thus far that such instances existed. Certain infantry officers questioned while preparing this work have hinted, however, that reinforcements may have concealed knowledge of weapons such as the P.I.A.T. and Bren light machine gun in the hope of drawing a less dangerous assignment.

466. The Ottawa Journal editorial pointed out that this couldn't be "dismissed as the complaint of an irresponsible junior officer" and argued:

No official brush-off can dispose of these charges by Major Smythe. They are true or they are not true. If they are not true, the public has a right to expect of the Government that it prove they aren't true; to show where, why, and how they are false. If they are true, with the Government unable to produce facts to the contrary, then the country has a right to feel that our men overseas and the whole war effort are being betrayed and to demand that those responsible for the betrayal be punished.

The Canadian people, by an overwhelming majority, voted the Government a mandate to draft and send reinforcements overseas when they were needed. If it be true that the Government is flaunting that mandate, refusing to send overseas the right reinforcements when the right reinforcements are vital, the while keeping in Canada more than 50,000 trained men who refuse to go overseas voluntarily, then the position is disgraceful. So disgraceful—if that be a strong enough word—that those responsible for it deserve severe condemnation.

During the ensuing month editorials of a similar vein appeared in all newspapers opposed to the Government's manpower policy and did much to fan the fire lighted by Mr Ralston on his arrival in Ottawa.

467. In a memorandum written for Mr Ralston to present to the Prime Minister and other members of the Cabinet War Committee on Thursday, 19 Oct (and enclosing a more detailed memorandum prepared at C.M.H.Q. on 15 Oct) General Stuart wrote:

...Until about two months ago, I was satisfied with the general reinforcement position both in respect to First Canadian Army and 1 Cdn Corps in Italy.

There were three main reasons for my optimism: the general strategic situation, our overall reinforcement holdings and my expectation, based on 21 Army Group forecast of activity, that casualties for balance of 1944 would be intense and normal in alternative months.

In early August every indication pointed to an early collapse of Germany. I felt very strongly, as did the Army Commander and many senior British Commanders and Staff Officers, that the German Army was in the process of being decisively defeated and would probably collapse before December 1944. Today, largely because of the successful German strategy of denying the Channel Ports to us, a German collapse cannot be regarded as imminent. We cannot deploy our superior strength against Germany simply because lack of suitable port facilities will not permit of an "all out" offensive on all sections of the front for some time to

come. Intelligent planning demands, therefore, that we must prepare for the prolongation of the war against Germany into 1945 (9).

468. General Stuart estimated that by the end of the year there would be a deficiency of about 2000 infantrymen but a holding of about 15,000 reinforcements for other Corps. He went on to point out that "nothing is certain" in war and that the position might very likely be much worse:

I say this because of what has actually happened in the last two months. Our casualties in infantry have been greater than was anticipated for two main reasons. The first was that we anticipated infantry casualties at 45% of total casualties; they proved to be 75% of casualties. The second was that forecasts must also be based on an anticipated scale of activity. We used 21 Army Group scale of activity with intense and normal casualties alternating monthly. Actually since "D" day our casualties in 21 Army Group have been at an intense rate continuously.

Whereas he would have liked to send 2000 or 3000 infantrymen to Italy at the end of September he had been able to release only 500. At the end of October it would be possible to send only 1000 instead of "several thousand" with the result that considerable shortages would have to be accepted in Italy. As it was, the despatch of even 1000 in October might further complicate the situation in North-West Europe. Due to the importance attached to this memorandum it has been considered advisable to quote the remainder:

It is important to note that our infantry reinforcement situation, as a result of our aggressive remustering programme, has been improving progressively since 2 Sep 44. We have reduced the overall infantry deficiency in A.E.F. from 3299 on that date to an overall surplus of 590 on 11 Oct. Our position in Italy on 14 Oct shows an overall deficiency of about 100 infantry.

... We are carrying on an aggressive remustering campaign and will continue to do so. It must be appreciated, however, that there is a definite limit to what can be done. We have now remustered to infantry practically all surplus other arms that meet infantry age and physical standards and who are not highly skilled tradesmen in the other arms. Further numbers will be remustered from the 6312 other ranks expected to reach this country from Canada before 31 December and I have issued instructions that further other arms tradesmen shall be remustered for general duty infantry. This will help the infantry situation and I hope will result in changing our minus holding of infantry at 31 Dec 44 to a small surplus holding. This, however, does not alter the main picture of having at 31 Dec 44 a total holding of trained reinforcements in U.K., in N.W. Europe and in Italy of less than 10,000 reinforcements in all arms with little or no infantry.

Other factors that are causing me considerable

concern are the shortage of French speaking infantry reinforcements and the question of leave, particularly in the case of troops serving in Italy. We have reached the "bottom of the barrel" in respect to French speaking infantry reinforcements. For the balance of this year there are less than 600 other ranks in sight. This figure, of course, does not include the number of wounded who in due course will return to their units. It is, nevertheless, a distressing condition and I am afraid there is only one solution to this problem.

The question of leave is already beginning to affect morale in Italy. It may soon do likewise in Europe. Winter conditions in both theatres will aggravate the situation. All concerned know that the absence of a generous leave policy is due to shortage of replacements. The men cannot understand why they, who have volunteered, must keep on going into battle and living constantly in the greatest danger and discomfort when trained replacements are available in Canada living in comparative safety and luxury.

The only solution that I can see is to find an additional 15,000 infantry to add to our reinforcement pool on or before 31 Dec 44, and to ask that replacements sent monthly from Canada in 1945 shall be increased to 5300, of whom 4300 should be infantry. The above addition to the pool will give us one month's holding in each theatre and one month in the U.K. for each theatre.

It is apparent, of course, that I am leading up to a recommendation that the future effective maintenance of our Canadian forces in two theatres requires that additional personnel be made available from Canada for service overseas. Actually such is my belief today.

I can assure you that I am not anxious to make the recommendation implied above. On the other hand, I consider that, as Chief of Staff, C.M.H.Q., one of my major responsibilities is to ensure that formations in the field are supplied with adequate and well trained reinforcements. I am satisfied that the reinforcements being sent to both theatres have been well trained. I am satisfied that, up to the present time, reinforcements have been adequate in respect to overall numbers but, for a series of military reasons beyond my control, I must admit that reinforcements have been inadequate as to numbers in respect to the infantry arm. I am not satisfied, and I have attempted to express my reasons in this letter, that anticipated reinforcements will be adequate to meet future requirements of this war against Germany.

I recommend, therefore, if the numbers required cannot be found from General Service personnel in Canada, that the terms of service of N.R.M.A. personnel be extended to include

overseas service in any theatre.

469. After Mr Ralston had made his report to those members of the Cabinet War Committee available in Ottawa the Prime Minister reiterated his strong opposition to the institution of "conscription for overseas service" and referred to the national issues involved. Mr Ralston agreed as to the gravity of the situation and the necessity for the fullest discussion before a decision was reached. (General Stuart was in attendance.) It was agreed that the question would be deferred to a meeting of the full Cabinet on the following Tuesday (24 Oct).

470. The reinforcement situation was discussed by the Cabinet War Committee again on Friday, 20 Oct and military appreciations of the most favourable and unfavourable eventualities were prepared at N.D.H.Q., based in part upon the telegrams that passed back and forth daily between General Stuart and Brigadier Bostock who was digesting the latest data at C.M.H.Q. On Monday 23 Oct the acting Adjutant-General, Brigadier A.C. Spencer, compiled a memorandum answering Mr Ralston's questions on the availability of G.S. reinforcements: the Chief of the General Staff also submitted his views (10).

471. The C.G.S. concurred in General Stuart's opinion that the war would continue into 1945 and estimated that the maintenance of the reinforcement pool would require the despatch overseas of an additional 15,000 infantrymen before the end of the year and a continuing monthly despatch of 4000 reinforcements, of which 3000 should be infantry. N.D.H.Q. already was committed to the despatch of 12,000 reinforcements during the last quarter of 1944 (approximately 6000 infantrymen) but these had been included in General Stuart's calculations before seeking the additional commitment (11).

472. The Adjutant-General's memorandum* had estimated that an additional 5500 G.S. soldiers could be withdrawn for despatch overseas—1500 from the Infantry training stream, 1500 by remustering from other corps, 500 from young soldiers if the minimum age were lowered from 19 to 18 1/2 (not recommended by General Murchie), 750 from N.C.Os. reduced to privates (although allowed to continue existing rates of pay for six months) (see para 407), 750 tradesmen on a similar basis and 500 men with a PULHEMS profile as low as 2212221 (instead of the existing 1111221 for general duty infantrymen) (12).

473. General Murchie noted that as a result of an extensive recruiting campaign some 9000 N.R.M.A. soldiers had been converted to 'general service' in the face of demands for labour to work on farms and other projects of an essential nature. These non-military demands and the campaign being carried on in the press for further employment of N.R.M.A. personnel on such projects had, however, built up a resistance against volunteering. The number of conversions had dwindled in the past few weeks and General Murchie considered that a further recruiting campaign might merely increase this resistance. In any case, it was clear that the available assets were considerably short of the overseas requirements (13).

474. Further possibilities were the reduction in the strength of Infantry battalions overseas from four to three rifle companies, with a corresponding reduction in the

* Although Major-General A.E. Walford had returned to Canada to assume the appointment of Adjutant-General this memorandum was signed by Brigadier A.C. Spencer (V.A.G.) who was carrying on in an acting capacity.

strength of other Arms, or the disbandment of an Infantry division. Either of these courses would reduce the effectiveness of the Canadian Army, even though the reductions would provide replacements for continuing needs and reduce the overall Infantry reinforcement requirements by reducing the number of casualties. General Murchie concluded that the adoption of either of these courses was "a matter of Government policy" but before a decision was reached "it would be essential" to consult the field commanders. A third alternative was to extend the terms of service of N.R.M.A. personnel to permit their despatch overseas. In this manner sufficient reinforcements could be provided to restore the required pool overseas and meet continuing monthly requirements. "Based on purely military considerations", General Murchie advised that the adoption of this step would meet requirements without disrupting the organization and fighting efficiency of the Canadian Army (14).

475. Speaking later (29 Nov) in the House of Commons Mr Ralston related how he had agreed with the objections of the C.G.S. to either of the other courses and considered that "when trained N.R.M.A. men were available, Canada's duty at this crucial period of the war was to support our men in the line, and that our obligation to them, to ourselves and to our allies was not to relax but to go on with the task to help shorten the war" (15). There were 8000 N.R.M.A. infantrymen who might be despatched almost at once and a further 8000 who might be got ready in a month's time. There were an additional 26,000 N.R.M.A. soldiers who might be remustered and trained as general duty infantrymen (16).

476. At a meeting of the Cabinet War Committee on 24 Oct, prior to the meeting of the full Cabinet, Mr Ralston advised his colleagues of the contents of these Memoranda. He pointed out further that it would be necessary to make provision for the replacement of 500 men per month on rotation leave*

477. Although the affirmative answer given to the 1942 Plebiscite seeking release from the Government's previous commitments had been followed by amendment to the National Resources Mobilization Act (see para 144) the Prime Minister did not consider that the emergency was serious enough to make such implementation necessary. Mr King believed that the

*Early proposals had come to naught but following his return to London from visiting Canadian troops in Italy, where the question had been raised wherever he talked with the troops, Mr Ralston had directed officers at C.M.H.Q. to provide him with the essential details of a leave to Canada scheme for men who had spent four years overseas, six months of which had been spent in a theatre of operations. The C.M.H.Q. study, produced on 14 Oct, showed that there were 2066 officers and 28,006 other ranks with not less than four years service overseas of whom 679 officers and 12,778 other ranks were serving in Italy. It was obvious, however, that only a token number of men could be given leave initially. Such a scheme was worked out at N.D.H.Q., approved by the Military Members of the Army Council on 29 Oct and submitted to the Minister of National Defence on 1 Nov. Mr Ralston having resigned, however, it was left to his successor to announce the policy whereby officers and men with not less than five years continuous service overseas became eligible for 30 days leave at home (AHQ Report 23).

introduction of compulsory military service overseas would split the country wide open, with the people of Quebec and other minority groups forced to take up a position diametrically opposed to the views of the remainder. He considered that time meant everything, when the unity of the country was at stake, and if he could delay long enough any positive action might become unnecessary. Although circumstances had placed him in a position which his two great predecessors, Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Wilfrid Laurier had been spared, Prime Minister Mackenzie King was determined to follow their policy of procrastination in order to maintain national unity (17).

478. It is with this in mind that the Prime Minister's suggestions to the Cabinet War Committee should be studied. His Objective was to obtain as many volunteers as possible for overseas service and liquidate the balance of the Home Defence Army which he considered was sitting around doing nothing while there were jobs begging in industry (Appendix "G"). He suggested financial inducements--the application of War Service gratuities to the whole of a man's N.R.M.A. service and additional "fighting pay" for general duty infantry actually in a theatre of operations. He himself would participate in a nation-wide recruiting campaign.

479. The meeting of the full Cabinet failed to produce agreement. Although nothing official was known various newspapers reported rumours that the Cabinet was split, with Hon. T.A. Crerar (Minister of Mines and Resources), Hon. Angus L. Macdonald (Minister of National Defence for Naval Services) backing Mr Ralston while the Ministers from Quebec, lead by Hon. C.G. Power (Minister of National Defence for Air and Associate Minister of National Defence), were just as firmly committed to the volunteer principle. Hon. James Gardiner (Minister of Agriculture), Hon. Humphrey Mitchell (Minister of Labour) and Hon. Ian Mackenzie (Minister of Veterans Affairs) supported the Prime Minister; Hon. J.L. Ilsley (Minister of Justice) and Hon. Colin Gibson (Minister of National Revenue) favoured conscription for overseas service; and other Ministers seemed capable of being swayed one way or the other (18).

480. The Cabinet War Committee got nowhere on 26 Oct but it was agreed, on the Prime Minister's suggestion, that Mr Power and Mr Macdonald should assist Mr Ralston with a further review of the Army's figures (19). The three Ministers met with the Military heads as suggested but subsequent discussions were conducted in the absence of Mr Ralston, so that his known views should not influence the proceedings. A few more bodies were found here and there but not nearly sufficient to tip the scales. On the following morning (27 Oct) Mr Power reported back that not more than 15,000 of the 120,000 G.S. personnel serving in the North American Area could be despatched overseas before 1 Jun 45. Unless medical standards were lowered there was little likelihood of the necessary reinforcements being found from existing G.S. personnel. While infantry units overseas should be at full strength on 1 Jan 45 there would be no reinforcements to replace casualties occurring that month.

481. On 28 Oct the Commanders of First Canadian Army and 1st Canadian Corps reported that the latest activity forecast for their respective theatres until the end of the year had been confirmed by the 21st Army Group and Eighth Army (20). Presuming that the Germans would decide to fight a decisive battle west of the Rhine, the acting Army Commander furnished an estimate of three and a half weeks "normal" fighting followed by six weeks "intense". The forecast from

1st Canadian Corps in Italy was four weeks "quiet" followed by five weeks "intense" activity.

482. In a further and corrective memorandum of 30 Oct General Stuart pointed out that, although casualties in 21st Army Group had been continuously above "normal", they had not been continuously at the "intense" rate as previously estimated. The overall picture was not improved, however, as he explained:

The additional 15500 infantry that Canada will despatch to the U.K. between Nov 44 and May 45 will just suffice to meet the monthly increment until May 45. About 2500 of this additional infantry will become available in theatres in January and February. The increment will not meet anticipated casualties and starting at 31 Dec we shall be faced with an increased inf deficiency each subsequent month. A pool of inf reinforcements is required to meet these deficiencies; to meet casualties when our estimated rate is exceeded and to assist in meeting deficiencies in late Dec 44.

I consider, as stated in my memorandum of 15 Oct, that this pool should be 15000 which represents 6 weeks supply of inf reinforcements at intense rates (21).

483. Although a continuous campaign had been waged to induce N.R.M.A. personnel to volunteer for overseas service the political leaders now suggested that one more effort should be made. Army officers were far from optimistic, as they knew from experience that once an N.R.M.A. soldier advanced beyond the recruit stage of training he no longer was receptive to the usual enlistment propaganda. The response from the 13th Brigade had been poor--769 conversions from 2432 men [compare with para 333]--and even though some 10,016 N.R.M.A. soldiers "went active" during the period April-October 1944 the number of monthly conversions had begun to dwindle as summer turned into autumn; and not all of these were suitable for overseas service as general duty infantrymen anyway (21). Notwithstanding these facts Maj.-Gen. G.R. Pearkes (G.O.C.-in-C., Pacific Command) was asked what he thought were the chances for a fresh recruiting campaign, in which the Prime Minister and other Cabinet Ministers would take a leading part instead of leaving the onus on the local military officers as heretofore. Mr Ralston suggested a 10-day campaign but General Pearkes considered that such a short period would be next to useless. The latter thought that a campaign of three weeks' duration, aided by every conceivable means, might produce up to 1500 trained infantrymen: however, he was not sufficiently convinced to make any definite promise (23).

484. When the Cabinet met on Wednesday, 1 Nov Mr Ralston demanded action. In the hope of gaining his point, and well aware that two months was the minimum period which must elapse from the time it was decided to despatch these men until they could reach battle areas, the Minister of National Defence had made tentative arrangements for a special sailing late in November (24). This would provide a cushion against the shortages anticipated at the end of the year. Mr Ralston's proposals were (25):

N.R.M.A. Nov shipment	8000	
N.R.M.A. Dec shipment	<u>7000</u>	15000

Available monthly inf
rfts all sources 1945

Jan	3000	
Feb	3000	
Mar	3000	
Apr	3000	
May	<u>3000</u>	15000

Estimated returned
casualties

Jan	1400	
Feb	1400	
Mar	1400	
Apr	1400	
May	<u>1400</u>	<u>7000</u>

37000

Although agreeing to give the volunteer principle one more try (a special recruiting appeal to the Home Defence army, extending over two or three weeks) Mr Ralston had wanted to know what would be done if this appeal should fail (26). He wanted a definite time limit set and Cabinet agreement that, in the event of failure, conscription for overseas service would be instituted at once. However, Mr Ralston could get no assurance on this point. Indeed, he found that, with certain exceptions, the members of the Cabinet did not consider that the Prime Minister's speeches in 1942 (see para 142) bound the Government to take such action (27).

485. According to the version given by the Prime Minister during a subsequent debate in the House of Commons:

... until I knew that it was only a matter of hours, at the most one or two days possibly, though I believe it was more nearly a matter of hours, that the Minister of National Defence would tender his resignation because we had not been able to agree... it was not until then that I asked myself: Is there any way of helping to save the appalling situation that may arise if the minister resigns... It was then and only then that I thought there was one man in this country who might help to save that situation. Could I find as minister of national defence someone who the country had reason to believe had a knowledge of military affairs and knew the need of the army, a man who understood relations between the state and the army which also would have to be considered. Until I thought of the one I did, I can tell hon. members that I had well nigh begun to despair of what could be done to save the situation.

It was then that I called in General McNaughton and told him the plight I was in, and the position of the government as I saw it, and asked whether he felt that by a voluntary appeal, which there was still time to make, we could find the necessary men. He told me he believed that they could be found, the numbers not being large, as my hon. friend the former minister of national defence for air has just said, and that an appeal launched in the proper way and carried on in the right

spirit would bring forward the men. I asked him on the following day, or the same day, I have forgotten which, I had only two conversations with him, whether he would assume that responsibility himself if a crisis arose, whether he would come into the government and take on his shoulders the burden of making an appeal, with faith in it, believing that it might be successful.

I did not know then, and I do not know yet, what General McNaughton's politics are. I do not think he has been identified with any political party. I know him as a man of fine liberal outlook, of rare scientific ability and of great military experience, and I felt I owed it to the people of the country never to let this country get into the position, if it were possible to avoid it, where at a time of war Canada would be left without a minister of national defence, and possibly without several of the members of the cabinet who had carried on so large a part of this war effort.

It was when I told the cabinet that General McNaughton was prepared to assume this responsibility, that I thought that if we were going to make a public appeal we should lose no time because time was rapidly going by, that the minister said that if that was the case he thought he ought to tender his resignation at once, and it was tendered in the presence of my colleagues and myself. I received the written communication the next morning and I arranged to have the new minister sworn in on that morning as well (28).

486. Mr. H. Reginald Hardy's biographical volume, Mackenzie King of Canada (Toronto, 1949), suggests that Mr Ralston had been "pressing" the Prime Minister during these days and holding over his head "like a cudgel" a resignation offered during the summer of 1942 (but which had never been accepted) (29). These and other allegations showing the late Mr Ralston in an unfavourable light were quickly denied by Premier Angus L. Macdonald of Nova Scotia who issued a lengthy statement to the Canadian Press defending the memory of his war-time colleague (30). Writing in The Winnipeg Free Press and also in defence of Mr Ralston's memory, Mr Grant Dexter produced the following version of what happened at this critical Cabinet meeting:

Mr. King opposed making any commitments of this kind. He said that he had decided on a different course. He recalled that Col. Ralston had put in a resignation in 1942 (when Bill 80 was under debate) that this resignation had neither been accepted nor withdrawn; that he had now decided to accept the resignation: that he had discussed the problem with General McNaughton who believed that the voluntary system could still produce adequate reinforcements; that General McNaughton was prepared to take over the portfolio from Col. Ralston; and that he had decided that the change should be made at once.

Col. Ralston thereupon rose from his seat,

shook hands with those present, and left the room, saying that he would send Mr. King a further letter of resignation on the following day (31).

Among the jobs held by Mr Dexter before becoming editor of The Winnipeg Free Press had been that of its political correspondent in Ottawa. Therefore the strongly Conservative Ottawa Journal suggested that Mr Dexter was not "guessing" and that "somebody who knew precisely what went on in the Cabinet in 1944 was not far from his elbow when he set out to vindicate Col. Ralston" (32).

487. As a result of the conflicting views presented over the radio by Mr King on 8 Nov and to the press by Mr Ralston on 12 Nov, the former obtained the Governor-General's permission to table the resulting correspondence in the House of Commons (33). A good bit of it is reproduced here as documentary evidence in the light of what had happened and was to happen shortly.

488. Mr Ralston's letter of resignation, dated 1 Nov, was as follows:

When I returned on October 18 from a visit to the Canadian troops in Italy, in north-western Europe and the United Kingdom, I felt compelled to recommend as a result of my own observations and inquiries in the battle theatres, and on the information and advice received from my officers, that due to infantry casualties being much greater than had been forecasted on the best information available, it had become necessary to secure substantial numbers of additional trained infantry personnel in order to make reasonable provision for the reinforcement of our troops overseas.

Since it appeared clear to me that enough volunteer personnel could not be made available to meet the need, I considered that I had no alternative but to recommend that N.R.M.A. personnel be sent overseas as reinforcements. I felt that this was necessary to fulfill our pledges to our fighting men.

The whole question was discussed at very considerable length both at meetings of the cabinet and of the war committee of the cabinet. My recommendation was not accepted.

Alternatives were suggested such as reducing our commitments or breaking up units or formations. I felt I could not concur in this when these trained N.R.M.A. men were available; and that at this crucial period Canada's duty was to support our men in the line, and not to relax but to go on with the task to help shorten the war and speed the victory.

It was suggested that, if a further appeal were made to trained N.R.M.A. personnel by ministers of the crown and others, such personnel might volunteer for general service in sufficient numbers to meet the need. This suggestion involved delays which I considered would be serious if the appeal was not successful.

Consequently I wished to be assured that it was government policy that if, after the appeal, the need for reinforcements overseas still existed and volunteers were not available, N.R.M.A. personnel would be sent. This was the course which I and some other colleagues had understood would follow from your speech in 1942. It was in effect what I, as minister, have repeatedly said in the house since then.

No such assurance was forthcoming. On the contrary it has developed in the discussions that the government as a whole (certain colleagues excepted) do not consider that your speech committed the government to this course.

I consider myself bound by what I have said in the house. Our differences are fundamental on the vital matter of reinforcing our troops and consequently and as requested by you, I at once tender my resignation as Minister of National Defence.

In the stand I have taken I have considered that my first thought should be my duty to our fighting men in our overseas army.

I wish every success to the distinguished citizen who I understand will take up the duties of this department, and at the same time I want to express to you my very sincere appreciation of the opportunity I have had of serving Canada's war activities (34).

489. In his reply of 3 Nov the Prime Minister insisted that Mr Ralston's statement to the Cabinet War Committee on 19 Oct was the "first report made to the government that the army's reinforcement position was causing concern" (35). He reminded Mr Ralston of the assurance given the Cabinet during the first week in August that "additional military commitments then being sought would not adversely affect this position" (see para 396). Again, at the time of the second Quebec Conference ("OCTAGON"), when future plans for the employment of Canada's Armed Forces were being discussed, "no intimation was given of any prospective insufficiency of reinforcements for the Canadian Army". Mr King contended that the Government had always regarded the reinforcement problem as "vital" and that, from the outset he had

... never agreed to a single increase in our military commitments without first asking and receiving assurances that the additional commitment would not jeopardize our capacity to provide needed reinforcements. The only difference which exists is one of the method or methods of meeting this fundamental vital necessity.

Mr King protested that he had always striven for a maximum war effort and for that reason did not now want to adopt a course of action which, "while not certain of accomplishing its purpose, would divide the country and thereby prejudice much that has been so magnificently accomplished throughout more than five years of war—and this on the eve of certain victory". Therefore, his letter continued:

I have made it clear that I am prepared to follow the course outlined in my speeches in parliament in 1942, if that course should ever be necessary, but I do not believe that it has become necessary.

There has not been a time since the war began that it has not been recognized that resort to conscription for service overseas would occasion the most serious controversy that could arise in Canada. I can think of no course of action fraught with greater danger to our war effort—to say nothing of the unity and strength of Canada today and for generations to come—than a general election at this late stage of war on the conscription issue. I believe that such an issue would almost certainly arise were the House of Commons to be asked to endorse an order in council extending the terms of service of N.R.M.A. personnel to include service overseas. Until it is apparent that conscription for overseas service is necessary to the full support of Canada's forces overseas, and that its application would prove effective, the government would not be justified in taking the risk of widespread national dissension.

490. Since Mr Ralston had intimated on several occasions that he would resign if the report of the Chief of Staff, C.M.H.Q. was not accepted, the Prime Minister had taken the precaution of sounding out General McNaughton. He discovered that General McNaughton "was not satisfied that compulsory service was necessary to provide full support for the army overseas". General McNaughton had indicated that, with the co-operation of the Cabinet, it should be possible to obtain the necessary reinforcements by voluntary means: should Mr Ralston resign the General had expressed willingness to assume this responsibility as Minister of National Defence.

491. Mr Ralston's letter of 6 Nov attempted to refute a number of points made by the Prime Minister. The major consideration was that Mr Ralston had received information which led him to believe that the needs of the Infantry reinforcement situation could not be met by departmental action alone. He had cabled the gist of his fears from London on 13 Oct. The casualties suffered by the additional Infantry brigade of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division had not been greater than these units would have suffered anyway. The plans for continuing the war against Japan had no real bearing on the reinforcement problem. The fundamental difference of opinion was whether or not the time had come to send N.R.M.A. soldiers overseas. Mr King had not mentioned the possibility of a general election when the passage of Bill 80 had been debated during the spring and early summer of 1942 (see paras 142-4). Mr Ralston's letter continued:

You mention that you always received assurances that additional commitments would not jeopardize our capacity to provide needed reinforcements. I recall that I have repeatedly said that I could not undertake that reinforcements would always be available wholly from volunteers. My point now is that due to an unexpectedly heavy proportion of infantry casualties and the developments of the war we need trained reinforcements, which I consider on the best examination I can make of the

situation are not available from volunteers. And we have unused man-power resources in the trained N. R.M.A. personnel, which I think we are bound to use.

In this connection I should remind you that all the formations which we are seeking to support to-day are formations which had been authorized by the government and approved by parliament previous to your speeches in 1942.

This brings me to your point about disunity in Canada. My speeches in the house make it clear, I think, that I have realized, from the first time the question was raised, the grave possibilities of division. That is why from the beginning to the end of my association with the Department of National Defence I have done everything I could to avoid it, and to maintain a wholly volunteer army overseas. I have had regretfully to come to the conclusion that to make reasonable provision for reinforcements it was necessary to recommend action to make N.R.M.A. men available. It seemed obvious that some measure of difference or disunity could not be avoided whichever course were taken. What weighed so heavily with me in the stand I have taken were our pledges to our fighting men and indirectly to their families (36).

492. The Prime Minister sought to clarify his views still further in a letter of 10 Nov. Dwelling upon the phraseology used earlier he explained that he had meant that a general election would be the inevitable consequence of any such attempt to impose conscription for overseas service rather than being a condition of it. Furthermore:

In your letter you recognize the grave possibilities of division resulting from the course you recommended. It is because I took so grave a view of the probable division which would result, and of the possibility that disunity and division in the country might seriously weaken our support for the army, as well as for other phases of our war effort, that I believed it was preferable to redouble our efforts to secure the required results by voluntary means, including a special appeal to the N.R.M.A. personnel and a review of the employment of the very considerable number of general service personnel serving in Canada and the United Kingdom (37).

493. In his reply of the same date Mr Ralston again disclaimed the Prime Minister's interpretation of events. Regarding the Quebec Conference and subsequent events, he wrote:

You speak as if "any possibility" of having to resort to conscription for overseas service had not been in mind. May I point out that your speeches in 1942 envisage that very possibility, and the initiation and passing of Bill 80 was in the light of that possibility.

You will recall also that I went to you at Quebec, regarding certain reports I had heard as to your expressed attitude on this matter;

and the fact that I asked you, and you gave me, your assurance then that you would stand by your speeches in 1942, indicates that, at least in my mind, the possibility still existed; although I must say that at the time I had no expectation of the developments which have since occurred.

As a matter of fact, it was, I think, at the next meeting of war committee following the Quebec conference that I did indicate, as a result of further information received in the meantime, the possibility of difficulties regarding infantry reinforcements and the necessity, in my view, for keeping N.R.M.A. personnel available in the light of the uncertainties.

May I again come back to the real crux of this matter, which is the actual and urgent situation which I reported instantly on my return from overseas, and which I considered left me no alternative but to recommend as I did (38).

494. It was not until 29 Nov that Mr Ralston admitted in the House of Commons that he had not drawn attention to General Stuart's telegram of 26 Aug requesting authority to use Infantry tradesmen as general duty infantrymen until the existing shortage had been made good (see para 412). That telegram had indicated, however, that two-thirds of the serious shortage within Infantry units could be made good in six days and the balance in about two weeks as a result of the remustering programme undertaken in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, he continued:

... If I remember correctly it was a Sunday morning, and I simply initialled the telegram and handed it back to the chief of the general staff. The telegram concluded by stating that everything would be all right in three weeks. As a matter of fact, if I had known as much then as I know now I would have realized that this meant that it would be unlikely that the pools would be built up, although if it had come to my mind at all I would have thought that the men who were being trained in England would be coming in again in three weeks, and that this was simply a situation to be tided over at that time. I say quite frankly that I did not tell the cabinet about it. There was no possible reason for my withholding it ... I did bring it to the attention of the cabinet when it was brought to my attention again, but that was after I had come back. As a matter of fact I brought it to the attention of the cabinet when I asked for approval of the paying of infantry tradesmen (39).

495. Meanwhile, press comment was voluminous, but varied with the politics of each newspaper. The Ottawa correspondent of The Gazette (Montreal) reported a local rumour on the evening of 1 Nov that the Prime Minister's plan involved reducing the size of the Canadian divisions in Italy and North-West Europe, pulling the troops out of the line and giving them a much needed rest. Editorials in The Toronto Evening Telegram of 3 Nov were headed "A Piece of Government Hypocrisy Blown Sky-High by Events", "Window-Dressing Appointment in Ministry of Defense" and "Canadian People Hoodwinked Too Long By W.L. Mackenzie King". The second of these editorials pointed

out that:

... It is unfortunate that General McNaughton who did a good job in training the Canadian forces in Britain, should be utilized as window dressing in this fashion by the most adept of political window dressers.

It is nonsense to talk of inspiring confidence by any appointment to take the place of a Minister of Defense who has resigned because, after a study of conditions on the ground, he is convinced that the reinforcement set-up is faulty. The men who are fighting overseas know what conditions are, and will not be inspired with confidence in the Government which is responsible for those conditions by the mere addition to the cabinet of a man who is favourably known to them. They will not necessarily be convinced that a man who has been out of touch with the army through all the developments since D-day is cognizant of conditions as they have been since that event.

If Hon. Mr. McNaughton's conduct of his department is to place the interests of overseas men foremost and to maintain the war effort in the best manner possible he can pay no less regard than paid by Mr. Ralston to the necessity for adequate and fully trained reinforcements. In that event all that Mr. King gains by letting Mr. Ralston go is delay. However convenient to Mr. King it may be to delay the issue and however favourable to his political ambitions, it is something the people of Canada will not condone.

496. Supporting the Government's policy, on the other hand, The Ottawa Citizen (4 Oct) stated that war correspondent Ross Munro had found Canadian troops fighting on the Scheldt "astonished and delighted" to hear that General McNaughton had been appointed Minister of National Defence. The Ottawa Citizen also praised the Prime Minister's efforts to maintain national unity and avoid the dangers which had troubled the Union Government of 1917.

(ii) Conscription Comes

497. Any doubts that may have existed as to General McNaughton's stand on the question of conscription for overseas service were soon removed. On 4 Nov certain newspapers inimical to the Government carried news stories of the reaction of the troops at the front, as soon as it became apparent that the so-called "Zombies" were not going to be sent overseas. According to war correspondent **Lionel Shapiro**:

What has shocked Canadian troops ... is that Gen. McNaughton, beloved of all ranks in the Army appears, at least from this distance, to have thrown his influence and popularity to the side of the anti-conscriptionists.

Hope persists here that Gen. McNaughton will come overseas almost immediately to examine the situation and return home with recommendations similar to those made by Col. Ralston.

Such a move, carrying Gen. McNaughton's stamp of authority would make any future reversal of policy by Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King a great deal less embarrassing politically than immediate action on the recommendation of Col. Ralston, who is a civilian politician (40).

As The Ottawa Journal pointed out in a subsequent editorial, however, there "was no means" by which correspondents "could know that what they were writing was true" (41). Any single correspondent could speak to only relatively few soldiers and, of necessity, had to accept the views expressed.

498. Speaking at Arnprior on 5 Nov General McNaughton made his position very clear. The next morning the Montreal Gazette reported as follows:

"I am firmly convinced," he said, "that the best hope lies in the maintenance of our long traditions of voluntary service." He claimed that available information on reinforcements indicated "some short period yet before there is danger of the situation becoming acute." He voiced confidence that now the need was known, "our men and women will rally to the support of our gallant comrades overseas."

On its editorial page The Gazette commented as follows:

But now General McNaughton, with complete candour and no double talk, had made it perfectly clear where he, and obviously the Government, stand in the matter. There is no denial that the need is acute for men or that the situation may become acute in a "short period". But on the ground that conscription came too late in the last war to be of any use and because it has been avoided so far in this war, they are going to stick to it, come what may.

It is a help for Canadians now to know definitely how the Government and its new Defence Minister view the problem, but there will be many who will hardly be reassured to learn it. If trained draftees will get overseas too late to be of any use, how much longer will it take to recruit and train the volunteers who, it is admitted are now urgently required.

499. That evening (6 Nov) General McNaughton spoke to the Ottawa Branch (No. 16) of the Canadian Legion but was given a stormy reception. During the course of a speech that was interrupted frequently by heckling General McNaughton made the first public announcement of a scheme for providing leave in Canada for men with a long period of service overseas: he hoped that the first group of such men could be brought home in time for Christmas (42). Meeting in Ottawa at this time the Dominion Executive Council of the Canadian Legion issued a strongly worded statement demanding that N.R.M.A. soldiers should be sent overseas (43): on 9 Nov a brief was presented to the Prime Minister. Opposition newspapers developed a more bitter tone during succeeding days and fuel was added to the fire by Mr Ralston's statement of 12 Nov, informing newspapermen why he had considered "conscription for overseas service to be necessary at this time" (44).

500. Meanwhile, behind the scenes all had been busy. On 3 Nov the Cabinet had decided to appoint a Committee on

Recruiting, comprising General McNaughton, Hon. Ian Mackenzie (Veterans Affairs), Hon. James G. Gardiner (Agriculture), Hon. W.P. Mulock (Postmaster General), Hon. Colin Gibson (National Revenue), Maj.-Gen. L.R. LaFlèche (National War Services) and Hon. Brooke Claxton (National Health and Welfare). This committee held a first meeting on 6 Nov and prepared a report for submission to the Cabinet meeting of the following day (45). According to the information supplied by the Army, some 150,000 men had been enrolled under the authority of the National Resources Mobilization Act since March 1941: of these, 42,000 had "gone active", 6000 had enlisted in the Navy or R.C.A.F., 33,500 had been discharged and 8676 were on extended leave for agricultural or industrial work (Appendix "G"). A "hardened core" of only 59,679 actually were serving on military duty—men who had resisted all previous appeals to volunteer for overseas military service.

501. According to an analysis made, with effect from 11 Oct, the marital status and previous civilian occupation of these 59,679 N.R.M.A. soldiers had been (46):

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Married</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>Widower</u>	<u>Separated</u>	<u>Total</u>
Agriculture	1236	9870	5	3	11114
Bldg trades	1084	3184	3	5	4276
Clerical	377	1935	1	5	2318
Manufacturing	3163	9178	6	13	12360
Forestry	345	1704	2	-	2051
Mercantile	778	1939	3	8	2728
Mining	288	739	-	2	1029
Professional	128	489	1	2	620
Transport	1921	4659	11	6	6597
Misc (chiefly unskilled)	<u>2867</u>	<u>13692</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>16586</u>
	12187	47389	48	55	59679

Of the 42,000 considered to be suitable as infantry reinforcements, with or without conversion training, some 15,700 were stationed in Pacific Command. Their home provinces had been given on enlistment as (47):

Ontario	-	10250
Quebec	-	16300
Maritimes	-	2600
Prairies	-	10000
British Columbia	-	2850

It appeared that not more than 37 per cent were of French racial origin: 17,000 spoke English only, 12,000 spoke only French, 14,000 spoke English and French and the remainder had other racial backgrounds. For a long time the military had realized that these men had a "group loyalty" to their N.R.M.A. comrades and did not see any need for proceeding overseas. Many of these men also were subjected to pressure from home and had assumed an attitude of self-styled importance—even martyrdom. Such an attitude had been encouraged by the benefits, financial and otherwise, that had been extended to N.R.M.A. personnel.

502. The Cabinet Committee on Recruiting had agreed that the best line of approach would be simply to state the facts, rather than continue "skating around the problem". Its members considered that the "situation should and can be met by the voluntary co-operation of the Canadian people". After all some 900,000 men had volunteered for the Armed Forces since the outbreak of War and now that the Navy and R.C.A.F. no longer

were in the market for recruits it was hoped that the men remaining in the manpower pool would volunteer for general service with the Army. Radio appeals of a non-political nature were to be made by General McNaughton and the Prime Minister and church dignitaries were to be asked to suggest that parents put the pressure on their sons to volunteer. Newspaper publishers and veterans organizations were to be contacted but a nationwide publicity campaign, in the press and over the radio, was not recommended because:

- (a) it would not reach the people for whom it was intended;
- (b) it would arouse opposition; and
- (c) it would over-emphasize the importance of the N.R.M.A.

Instead, recruiting efforts on the civilian front should be designed:

- (a) to create a favourable atmosphere for the government's policy; and
- (b) to persuade people to do their utmost to urge others to volunteer (48).

503. Since the men really wanted in this emergency already were in the Army as N.R.M.A. soldiers it was considered that the task of persuading them to "go active" really should fall on their officers. Instead of being harangued in large groups as heretofore, N.R.M.A. soldiers were to be canvassed individually: discrimination was not to be practised and they were to be made to feel that, as individuals, they were soldiers who were being well treated and well trained for possible employment overseas (49).

504. General approval was given to this programme at the Cabinet meeting on the following day (7 Nov). In addition, the following proposals were discussed: formation of a pioneer company to replace the N.R.M.A. personnel presently working on Sunnybrook Hospital (Toronto), the desirability of granting discharge or extended leave to men who had been improperly enrolled under N.R.M.A. and the (already approved) scheme for 30-days' leave at home for personnel who had been serving overseas for a considerable period (50). After special consultation with the Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence, General La Flèche was given the special task of finding reinforcements for the four French-speaking infantry battalions serving overseas (51), since they were in a considerably worse position than the English-speaking units (see paras 451-4).

505. The above might well be compared with the rumour carried in The Ottawa Citizen of 6 Nov that General McNaughton was working on the following three-point policy regarding N.R.M.A. soldiers:

1. A strongly renewed direct appeal to the men in the home defence army to go active and volunteer for overseas service.
2. Use of Order-in-Council 7429 of Oct. 3 to put draftees to work on essential projects while still holding them under army jurisdiction and control subject to recall at any time.
3. Use of the home defence army, in due course, for duty as troops of occupation after the

defeat of Germany, and later of Japan.

506. In his radio address of 8 Nov, the Prime Minister outlined the policy which would be used to support the Canadian Army Overseas. The following extracts from this speech highlight what the Government was attempting to do:

... Since 1939, nearly a million men have served in Canada's three armed forces. The present strength of the three services is about three-quarters of a million. All but 68,000 are volunteers. These figures represent a stupendous achievement in raising fighting men for a nation of less than twelve millions, particularly when account is taken of the manpower required for war production and vital civilian services.

The problem of reinforcements concerns only one of the three armed services. The navy and air force have no such problem. The navy, with 85,000 men in the service, has reached the peak of its manpower needs. The air force with 190,000 men in its ranks, has passed the peak of its manpower requirements. For that, we should all be thankful. The reason is that air force casualties, though costly, have been very much lighter than were anticipated.

The present strength of the army including the draftees is over 455,000 men. Of this number, about 390,000 are volunteers. Over 45,000 men have volunteered for general service since January 1st of the present year. Most of the men now in the army have been in its ranks for one, two, three or four years. All but recent recruits have received long, rigorous and varied training.

... Is there an adequate reserve of reinforcements for the army? In the opinion of the military authorities, no difficulty is likely to arise except in relation to reinforcements for the infantry. Infantry reinforcements have been adequate to meet requirements to date. But, during his recent visit to the army overseas, Colonel Ralston learned that to provide replacements for future casualties at present rates, the flow of infantry reinforcements from Canada should be accelerated. One fact needs to be emphasized. There is not an overall shortage of potential reinforcements. Many thousands of men are in training now and enlistments are continuing at an encouraging rate. Because we cannot tell how long the war may last, we must, as long as a possible need may arise, continue to recruit men for the army to keep up the supply of reinforcements. But recent recruits and those who enlist from now on will not be available until they are trained.

Colonel Ralston's report to the government disclosed an immediate problem which has to be faced. That problem is to find the means of speeding up the flow of fully trained infantry reinforcements to meet, not an actual shortage of reinforcements now, but a possible shortage in the next few months.

The question many of you will ask at once, is: why not send overseas some of the draftees who are fully trained in Canada under the National Resources Mobilization Act?

That will seem to many of you the easiest way of meeting the problem. It is not, however, in accord with the policy of keeping our army overseas a 100 per cent voluntary army if we possibly can. The voluntary system of raising our overseas forces has produced splendid results during five years of war. We have always believed that Canada's forces, having begun as voluntary forces, would be more effective, and that the country would be more united in the support, if we continued to rely upon the voluntary system for reinforcements as long as the voluntary system continued to be effective....

From a purely military standpoint, there is no argument that it is preferable to reinforce a voluntary army with volunteers. The military authorities report that enlisting gives the draftees a new outlook, new self-respect, and a determination that comes from having made a great decision. That is bound to make them better soldiers. This is very important, because we are as much concerned with the quality as with the numbers of men sent overseas as reinforcements.

We must remember that if draftees are sent overseas before they volunteer, they will not be going to reinforce an army of drafted men. Over and over again it has been said that conscripted men would be received without enthusiasm by the volunteers they were sent to join. It is also said that the presence of conscripts would constitute a source of division, and possible dissension, in the fighting units. That is nevertheless a risk the government would have to take, if it was necessary to enable Canada to bear her just share of the load in the winning of the war.

But that is not the situation. There are some thousands of trained volunteers already overseas or about to be despatched overseas as reinforcements. Others are being re-mustered. There are in addition, many thousands of volunteers in training in the army in Canada. Every day draftees are volunteering for overseas service. We believe their number can be increased by emphasizing anew the need and the opportunity for overseas service.

We had to ask ourselves one other question: How many additional men would be immediately available if compulsion were resorted to in order to send draftees overseas? I have told you that the present effective total of draftees in the army is under 60,000. Of that number only about 42,000 are considered suitable material for infantry reinforcements. Some 16,000 of these men are trained as infantry. It is estimated that about 8,000 of them are sufficiently trained so they could be ready for combat at an early

date.

Without any compulsion or intensification of present methods a considerable number of these draftees would volunteer. We believe many more can be secured by a special appeal. The actual difference in numbers secured by the two methods might be very small indeed. The voluntary system has not broken down. At the moment, it is subject to an added strain which calls for an intensified effort at home, in the period immediately ahead, particularly to provide personnel in an advanced stage of training.

How great the difficulties would be in substituting conscription for overseas service for the voluntary system no one knows. But everyone who is honest with himself knows that there would be genuine difficulties and that they might be very grave. Instead, we are redoubling our efforts to meet the existing situation by the voluntary method. In these efforts, I appeal for the patriotic co-operation of all Canadians (52).

507. On 10 Nov it was revealed in the press that the release from the Home War Establishment of all soldiers fit for overseas service was being accelerated and would be completed just as soon as members of the C.W.A.C. and low category males could be substituted (53). Indeed, it was believed that nearly 100 soldiers would be released from N.D.H.Q. itself. For the present no further commitments would be made to make personnel available for work on essential civilian projects, although low category personnel might be made available later (Appendix "G"). Provision had been made for N.C.Os. to continue in receipt of existing rates of pay for a period of six months following transfer to Infantry on the assumption that by the end of that period they should be acceptable in their rank (54). (Even though an N.C.O. did not qualify for his existing rank in the Infantry and was reduced arrangements were made for him to receive his former rate of pay until the six month period was completed.) On 11 Nov The Winnipeg Tribune carried a news item suggesting, however, that not very many reinforcements would be obtained by combing out Headquarters, M.D. No. 10:

'This has been going on here for the last 18 months,' one officer said this morning. 'I think returns from M.D. 10 will be very small. I know of only a handful of suitable men, but they are on highly technical jobs and are of more value here.'

Another officer said: 'All headquarters staffs are being given tests of elementary training to see how they rate in military education.' He added: 'There may be a number of replacements once there are sufficient C.W.A.C.'s on hand.'

Major M.H. Garton, district recruiting officer, said this morning that N.R.M.A. 'Zombies' had made no special effort to go active after Gen. McNaughton's appeal last week.

'I believe 12 N.R.M.A. men have volunteered for active service since the 8th of the month. That's just about a normal figure.'

508. On 10 Nov the Cabinet Recruiting Committee approved General McNaughton's request for the formation of a civilian organization to assist recruiting. A sub-committee was formed and plans made to enlist the help of Senators, Members of Parliament, labour and farm leaders and to appoint civilian canvassers to interview parents and other dependents of N.R.M.A. soldiers (55).

509. General LaFlèche had been considering ways of making good his undertaking to supply reinforcements for the four French-speaking infantry battalions overseas and now (10 Nov) suggested to the Adjutant-General that men volunteering for general service should immediately be identified with overseas units. That is, they should be allowed to proceed to the unit of their choice and meanwhile wear its badges and shoulder titles. This was agreed to, in spite of the practical difficulty overseas of ensuring that reinforcements arrived at even a battalion of the same territorial regiment. (That same evening virtually the same request had been made by another Montreal Cabinet Minister, Hon. Brooke Claxton, who was telephoning from his own constituency.) (56)

510. On Monday, 13 Nov General LaFlèche publicized this plan during the course of a speech in Montreal. He claimed that the officers commanding four French-speaking battalions (3rd Battalion, Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal; 3rd Battalion, Le Régiment de Maisonneuve; Le Régiment de Chateauguay and Le Régiment de Joliette) had given him formal offers to supply recruits and he was waiting to hear from a fifth commanding officer (57). The Adjutant-General spent 17 and 18 Nov in Montreal discussing the problem and on the following day a special liaison officer was appointed at N.D.H.Q. to facilitate matters. Special authorization was given so that all (N.R.M.A.) Warrant and Non Commissioned Officers might retain their rank on conversion to general service and acting ranks might be confirmed.** As a further inducement;*** N.R.M.A. soldiers

*General Order No. 466, effective 2 Sep 42, had established a Canadian Infantry Corps. Subsequently officers and other ranks were members of this C.I.C. and might be posted to any regiment, although the principle of reinforcing on a territorial basis was still the ideal. Unposted Infantry reinforcements wore the badges and shoulder title of the Canadian Infantry Corps.

**Hitherto men had had to revert to the status of private soldier upon enlisting for overseas service, although C.A.R.O. 3631 of 18 Sep 43 had made it possible for a Commanding Officer to restore rank immediately if a vacancy existed in the unit war establishment. Actually a number of G.S. soldiers had been making a practice of voluntarily relinquishing both acting and confirmed ranks in order to proceed overseas.

***On 1 Dec the war diary of Headquarters, Petawawa Military Camp stated:

The Commander inspected an outgoing draft of French-speaking G.S. soldiers, recently converted from N.R.M.A., from A-2 CATC and A-5 CETC at 1600 hours. He presented their berets and G.S. badges to them.

At this time berets were being taken into wear in Canada only by personnel about to proceed overseas. On the other hand, the "G.S." badges worn on the right forearm by other ranks who had volunteered for general service had to be removed before proceeding overseas.

volunteering for overseas service might be given 96 hours leave in order that they might return home and personally acquaint their families with their decision (58). On 21 Nov it was announced that depot battalions would be formed into which N.R.M.A. personnel would be posted after volunteering for overseas service:

M.D. No. 5 - Royal 22e Régiment
Régiment de la Chaudière

M.D. No. 4 - Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal
Le Régiment de Maisonneuve
Le Régiment de Joliette
Le Régiment de Chateauguay

It was hoped to obtain the services of two well-known officers from overseas, Major Paul Triquet, V.C. and Major Hugues Lapointe (son of the late Rt. Hon. Ernest Lapointe) to command the depot battalions for M.D. No. 5. Actually, depot battalions of two officers and three other ranks were organized only for the four regiments serving in the operational theatres and Major Triquet managed to return overseas. Personnel were segregated into separate platoons which remained together for the whole training period and proceeded overseas as sub-units under the original subaltern. It was proposed, if possible, to keep such platoons together until the actual theatre of operations was reached*.

511. In the meantime the several D.Os.C. and G.Os.C. had been called to Ottawa and on 14 Nov General McNaughton spoke to them of his hopes. He emphasized that the deficiency

*The scheme of enticing French-speaking N.R.M.A. soldiers to enlist into the depot battalion of their choice and proceed overseas as members of distinct platoons had not been communicated to C.M.H.Q., where officers learned of it only during casual conversation with Brigadier deLalanne in January. After being supplied with the details in a telegram of 24 Jan 45 General Montague replied that he was shocked to learn of the "unqualified undertaking" given these men. General Crerar was in thorough agreement and, in a telegram of 2 Feb to C.M.H.Q., emphasized that:

... As Cdn Army Comd I am unable to accept any such specific undertaking. The maximum that I can reasonably ensure is that French-speaking inf reinforcements reaching this theatre are posted to one of the three French-speaking bns. I can not and will not guarantee that they will be posted to bn of own choice though I would expect 2 Ech automatically to arrange this when such disposition would not adversely affect French speaking reinforcement situation as a whole.

In the meantime, however, one such platoon had arrived overseas, its officer carrying a letter certifying that it had become known in Canada as the "Wolves Pl", and two more were en route. Pending the arrival of the Adjutant-General instructions were issued that such platoons were to be kept intact. The Adjutant-General brought tidings that a scheme was afoot in Ottawa whereby all future G.S. general duty Infantry reinforcements would be despatched in similar platoons. This never materialized, however, and no action appears to have been taken by C.M.H.Q. to break up the complete French-speaking platoons which did arrive (59).

of Infantry reinforcements was a short term problem and would be solved in time by the diversion of 75 per cent of recruits to Infantry and continued remustering from other corps. In the meantime, however, drastic action was required to meet overseas needs. Apart from "recoverable casualties" the only immediate source of general duty infantrymen was the 16,000 N.R.M.A. soldiers in Canada. According to the minutes of this conference, General McNaughton then

... stressed the need for persuasion and careful explanation to NRMA of the national necessity. Draftees should be made to realize how great a contribution to the state they would be rendering by volunteering for general service (60).

512. The policy of the Government, according to General McNaughton, "was to use the volunteer method, not compulsion, and to this end every means should be taken to enlist the support of the public and to emphasize to N.R.M.A. personnel the opportunity and public responsibility which is theirs in this time of national emergency". The latest recruiting statistics would be published weekly so that the man in the street would know the facts and could lend moral support. Within Pacific Command were 8000 trained N.R.M.A. infantry and a further 8000 N.R.M.A. soldiers undergoing advanced training for that Corps. A programme for converting the remainder into general duty infantrymen was to be accelerated but there was to be no lowering of training standards.

513. At the conclusion of the Minister's statement the several Commanders reported on the preceding year's recruiting efforts. They emphasized that future prospects were not good since only the "hardened cases" remained. (The Army in Canada also contained a number of aliens and naturalized subjects of enemy origin who could not be despatched overseas) (Appendix "B"). Factors militating against volunteering were: home influence was opposed to sons going overseas (e.g. Mother would simulate a heart attack when son mentioned the subject); attractions such as farm leave, or duty, which were not available to G.S. personnel; higher rates of remuneration in civilian life; the anomalous situation that, whereas men would not volunteer for overseas service they would willingly accept compulsory service overseas. General McNaughton promised that the existing farm duty scheme would not be continued for men who were suitable for employment as infantrymen; men employed on civilian works projects should not receive more than their army pay and allowances and no one suitable for overseas service would be so employed (Appendix "G").

514. After the Minister of National Defence had left the meeting the Chief of the General Staff stated that "it was not for them to discuss the Government's policy... but rather to apply themselves to implement the policy" (61). This he summarized as:

- (a) Reduction in Home War Establishments.
- (b) Reduction in operational troops.
- (c) **Inducement** to N.R.M.A. to convert.

515. That evening General McNaughton issued a statement to the Press (62). The following day he issued an even more controversial statement, in the course of which he felt it necessary to deny that he had reversed his views on the adequacy of volunteer reinforcements for the Canadian Army Overseas (63). He was reported in newspapers across Canada as saying that

"after talking matters over with the Officers Commanding the Military Districts he was more than ever convinced the continuation of the voluntary system will provide the reinforcements" and that "his conference with his District Commanders had only confirmed his original view" (64).

516. Immediately the D.Os.C. of M.D. Nos. 1, 2, 10 and 13 and the G.O.C.-in-C., Pacific Command sent telegrams of protest to the Chief of the General Staff (65). Brigadier F.M.W. Harvey, V.C., M.C. telegraphed from Calgary that General McNaughton's statement had placed "those present in an entirely wrong position as at no time did we in any way give the Minister any encouragement to think along these lines in fact at the very last we asked you to inform him that our opinions were quite to the contrary" (66). General Pearkes followed up his telegram with a letter, which in part read as follows:

You will remember that the conference closed after I had asked you if a resolution should be adopted to the effect that after considering plans to implement General McNaughton's policy, we were of the opinion that sufficient men could NOT be produced. At the time I suggested that such a resolution might protect the D.O.Cs. You, however, considered it undesirable that any formal resolutions should be passed and agreed to inform General McNaughton of the opinion we had expressed. This I believe you did.

It is my intention to do everything in my power to endeavour to obtain the volunteers required. But having expressed quite frankly at the conference my grave doubts as to the effectiveness of the methods proposed, I must record a protest against these statements alleged to have been made by the Minister implying that those of us who had been at the conference had said anything that might reasonably be interpreted as giving the Minister any encouragement or any data that would increase his confidence in the ability to produce the required numbers by voluntary enlistment.

It would be very much appreciated if a press release could be made from N.D.H.Q. which would correct the erroneous impression which has been given.

My opinion is valued by a great many people in British Columbia and for this reason alone I have responsibilities beyond those of a purely military nature. Other General Officers Commanding are in similar position in their own Districts. We are, however, denied the privilege of correcting in the press such damaging statements ... and can only appeal through the authorized channels to have our position clarified (67).

517. On 20 Nov the Minister of National Defence issued a revised statement which read in part:

From their completely frank statement, given from their intimate contact with the problem, I was able to confirm the existence of a number of factors which had operated to deter or prevent men in the N.R.M.A. from coming forward to

volunteer for overseas service. I informed the officers gathered at the conference of the action already initiated to correct these adverse factors.

I was given assurance that the officers concerned would, on return to their stations, make every endeavour to provide the numbers of men required by voluntary conversion from the N.R.M.A., or by enlistments, or by freeing men from home defence and other local establishments who had already undertaken the obligation of general service overseas.

Despite the very serious difficulties which were frankly stated, but having this assurance of full support in another endeavour to solve the problem, I express my own belief that the problem will be solved (68).

518. That same day, however, further ammunition for the press was provided by Pacific Command. Before attending a conference called by General Pearkes certain senior officers were unwise enough to attempt to answer questions put by reporters and create the impression that they believed the reinforcement of the Canadian Army Overseas by voluntary means was doomed to failure. In an effort to counteract the resulting misleading statements in the press General Pearkes issued an official statement on the following day (21 Nov). According to this statement he had told his officers that:

... no coercion is to be used and that all will be told of the need of their services and the practical benefits to their own future by becoming volunteers and enjoying the full opportunities of successful re-establishment in civil life.

The men will be approached individually by their own officers and no attempt will be made to appeal to large gatherings (69)

He had failed, however, to give sufficient consideration to the state of public opinion over the conscription issue. Therefore, Lt.-Gen. W.E. Sansom was recalled from retirement leave and sent to Vancouver to investigate. General Sansom was able to explode the newspaper myth of "the open revolt of B.C. officers" and exonerate those involved from any motives of disloyalty to the Government (70). Certain officers had, however, been guilty of poor judgment.

519. Members of Parliament arriving in Ottawa, in response to the Prime Minister's decision that Parliament should meet on 22 Nov* reported that there was a feeling throughout the country that the N.R.M.A. soldiers appeared to be willing to go overseas if sent but not to volunteer. Members were deluged with telegrams and letters from their constituents, as well as from organizations such as the Canadian Legion and Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire urging conscription for overseas service. Others supported the stand taken by the Prime Minister (71).

520. When the Cabinet met on Monday, 20 Nov it

*Publicly announced on 13 Nov 44.

learned that the appeal for volunteers was failing.* General McNaughton's proposals would yield only sufficient Infantry reinforcements to provide nine weeks wastage at "intense" rates, and none of the men would get to field units before the beginning of 1945. General McNaughton's figures could be summarized as follows (72):

G.S. personnel available to leave Canada in
Nov and Dec

Present Inf	1500	
Remustered	<u>3500</u>	5000

Available monthly rfts 1945

Jan	2000	
Feb	2000	
Mar	2000	
Apr	2000	
May	<u>2000</u>	10000

Estimated returned casualties

Jan	1400	
Feb	1400	
Mar	1400	
Apr	1400	
May	<u>1400</u>	<u>7000</u>

22000

By the despatch of 15,000 trained N.R.M.A. infantrymen during November and December Mr Ralston would have provided a total of 37,000 such reinforcements, or 15 weeks wastage at 'intense' rates (see para 484). Even though the situation appeared hopeless a majority of the Cabinet members still opposed the introduction of conscription for overseas service. At the following day's meeting (21 Nov), however, some Ministers "took the position that they would not be placed in the position of meeting Parliament as members of a cabinet which supported the voluntary system" (73). They insisted upon making their position clear at a party caucus, to be held on Wednesday afternoon (22 Nov) following the opening debate in the House of Commons.

521. The situation was now complicated by what author Bruce Hutchison has erroneously termed a "revolt" by the Army (The Incredible Canadian, Toronto, 1952). On 21 Nov General Pearkes had advised the Chief of the General Staff that the commanding officers within Pacific Command were of the "opinion that few draftees would volunteer as men have apparently made up their minds to await conscription for overseas service and state freely that they consider it up to the government" (74).

*The diarist of The Dufferin & Haldimand Rifles wrote as follows on 17 Nov: "Lieut-Col. S.C. Clegg gave the boys a talk on the general situation in regard to overseas reinforcements, outlining the hardships that the boys over there are up against and the reasons why we ought to volunteer for General Service. Following his speech each man was interviewed individually by his Coy Comd in regard to going G.S." Only 24 men did volunteer for general service, however, and they were despatched to C.I.T.C. (A-29), Ipperwash for reinforcement training. The diarist also stated, on 18 Nov, that the unit had sent 68 officers and 1367 other ranks overseas during the Second World War.

While these commanding officers would do all they could to obtain volunteers they considered that large numbers of the N.R.M.A. soldiers would welcome compulsory despatch overseas as a means of avoiding individual responsibility. The situation was little better elsewhere. On the following morning (22 Nov) the Military Members of the Army Council met and agreed that the Chief of the General Staff should put their opinion in writing for the Minister of National Defence. After reminding General McNaughton of the recommendation made to Mr Ralston on 23 Oct that "the extension of the Terms of Service of N.R.M.A. personnel to permit their despatch overseas would most readily meet the immediate requirements of the Army Overseas and maintain its fighting efficiency" and his statement of the problem when General McNaughton assumed office, General Murchie wrote:

Careful examination of the problem has continued and every effort within our power has been made to meet this problem by the voluntary system.

After a careful review of all the factors including the latest expression of their views by the District Officers Commanding, I must now advise you that in my considered opinion the voluntary system of recruiting through Army channels cannot meet the immediate problem.

The Military Members concur in this advice (75).

One copy bore the additional signatures of the Master-General of the Ordnance, Quartermaster-General, Adjutant-General and Vice Chief of the General Staff (76). According to Bruce Hutchison's account, General McNaughton immediately telephoned the Prime Minister who was able to convince Hon. Louis St. Laurent that support of limited conscription for overseas military service was now essential (77).

522. Later in the day, following further discussion with the Adjutant-General, General Murchie advised the Minister of National Defence that, in their opinion, the shortage of Infantry reinforcements could be met by the despatch of 16,000 N.R.M.A. soldiers in addition to what G.S. soldiers were available. In his opinion 5000 N.R.M.A. soldiers could be despatched in each of December and January and the remainder in February (78).

523. Very little of a constructive nature materialized when the House of Commons convened on the Wednesday afternoon. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Gordon Graydon) attempted to move that the full provisions of the National Resources Mobilization Act should be implemented forthwith but the Speaker ruled him out of order since, according to the rules of the House of Commons, 48 hours' notice of motion had to be given. The only constructive result of the debate was agreement that General McNaughton should be permitted to make a statement on the following day, even though he was not yet a member of the House of Commons.*

*Individuals and newspapers not well versed in Canadian constitutional history suggested from time to time that General McNaughton should be made a member of the Senate in order to obviate the necessity of his contesting a seat in the House of Commons. Such a practice is still in vogue in the United

524. The expected discussion did not materialize at the Liberal Party's caucus. The Prime Minister entered and stated that he did not want discussion at this stage but would prefer to have another meeting of his Cabinet that evening and report back to caucus in the morning (80).

525. When the Cabinet met that evening the Prime Minister "executed a complete somersault" (81). He informed his colleagues that he had been advised by General McNaughton that the appeal for volunteers was a failure and that it would be necessary to invoke a measure of conscription for overseas service. Mr King added that, "with reluctance he had decided to accept this recommendation". The morning edition of The Ottawa Citizen (23 Nov) carried the bannerline "Understanding is Reported Reached in Cabinet After Night of Grave Tension". The news story below intimated that the Cabinet would present a united front.

526. When the House of Commons met that afternoon three Members expressed a wish to present petitions from their constituents advocating the institution of conscription for overseas military service and one of them, Dr. H.A. Bruce, inquired what the Prime Minister had meant in his 1942 speeches by the phrase "conscription if necessary" (82). Thereupon the Prime Minister proceeded to dumbfound his opponents by tabling an Order in Council, P.C. 8891, which the Governor-General had been requested to approve that morning. Under its provisions the Minister of National Defence was authorized and directed:

... to dispatch to the following localities of service, namely: The United Kingdom and/or to European and/or Mediterranean operational theatres such personnel, in such numbers as may be approved by the governor in council (the number hereby approved being sixteen thousand) who are serving by reason of their having been called out for training, service or duty pursuant to the provisions of the National Resources Mobilization Act, 1940, as are or may from time to time hereafter required, in the opinion of the said minister, for training, service or duty within said localities of service; such personnel to be detailed from such units, depots and establishments as may be designated by the said minister; and the Minister of National Defence is hereby authorized and directed to issue or cause to be

(cont'd from page 253)

Kingdom and Mr Churchill relates in his memoirs how a peerage was conferred upon Mr. Frederick Leathers in the spring of 1941 so that he might become Minister of War Transport without having to face the House of Commons. In Canada, however, Sir Robert Borden had initiated a policy of reducing the number of Senators in the Cabinet when he formed his first Government in 1911. The process was completed in 1921 when Prime Minister Mackenzie King announced that, "except for very special reasons, Ministers of the Crown holding portfolios will hereafter be selected from Members of Parliament occupying seats in the House of Commons." Subsequently this rule had suffered only one major infraction and on that occasion Prime Minister R.B. Bennet had pleaded that the appointment was not expected to be permanent. Thus, Prime Minister King considered himself bound to find a seat in the House of Commons for General McNaughton "within a reasonable time". On 11 Dec 44 General McNaughton accepted an invitation to become Liberal candidate in the North Grey by-election of 5 Feb 45 (79).