

CANADIAN ARMY INFANTRY LOSSES REPORTED HEAVY

Ottawa, Nov. 6.—(CP)—A prospective shortage of the ordinary man in khaki, who packs his rifle and bayonet and makes no claim to being a specialist in anything but doing a dirty job well, was seen to-day by authorities as the basic reason behind the resignation of Hon. J. L. Ralston as Minister of National Defence.

The over-all picture of army man power overseas is said to be good. That means there are enough soldiers to maintain Canada's fighting strength in the field. But sources in touch with military affairs said that as Canadians fought through Italy, France, Belgium and Holland casualties have been heavy among ordinary infantrymen with the task of rooting out Germans in close combat fighting.

In other words, recent events have borne out the old argument, often heard among first Great War veterans, that when the air force, the artillery, the mortar crews and all the specialists have finished their work there still remain the dangerous, difficult and inescapable chores of the "poor bloody infantry."

Use Specialists

When Col. Ralston and his supporters said that conscription for overseas should be applied, they are understood to have argued that additional reserves of non-specialists were needed. They were met with the argument that men now serving in specialist branches of the army where casualties have been lighter might well be transferred to ordinary infantry duties.

This was not accepted as a solution by the pro-conscriptionist group, who said the needs of the war were changing constantly and they could not afford to switch men from posts for which they have special qualifications. At some later time their knowledge might be essential in winning battles and, if they were not at hand, the cause would suffer seriously.

See No Shift

A large number of the men called for compulsory military service and now on duty within Canada have been trained as infantrymen and are skilled in the use of infantry weapons—the rifle, bayonet, grenade and light machine gun. This is exactly the type of reinforcement the army expects to need most as the battle of Europe merges into the battle of Germany and the issue is settled by soldiers fighting each other among the ruins of cities and towns after the bombers and the artillery have done their part.

The cabinet crisis which resulted after Col. J. L. Ralston returned from a tour of the battle fronts to report on reinforcements in the light of present and future operations gave rise to speculation that the 1st Canadian Corps on the Adriatic might be transferred to the western front. It was argued they could be used either to bolster the Canadian army or to ease the replacement problem if necessity arose.

In military circles such a move is not considered feasible. It would take months to withdraw the men and their equipment from the line and transport them to Holland. Stiff fighting still lies ahead in Italy and it would not be military strategy to shift them to the western front when battle-tried forces are needed in mountainous Italian terrain.

Transport Trouble

If they could be moved, it was explained, they would have to be replaced by troops either in Britain or by withdrawing forces from the western front. Such a move would keep upwards of 60,000 men idle during a period when they might be urgently needed at the front.

There is no doubt that the cabinet has explored this possibility and obtained the advice of the British high command. Earlier this year, for instance, there was some speculation that the 1st Corps might be transferred to the 1st Canadian Army after the second front opened.

War correspondents in Italy at that time queried high-ranking officers and they were told that such a move was not likely, due to transportation difficulties.

The officers did not overlook the possibility, however, that the time might come when the corps would come under command of 1st Army headquarters. They said it might be possible to make the switch when the land transport was available — perhaps when Allied forces in Italy and in Holland join hands in Germany.

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149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
CANADA
ARMY
CASUALTIES

totals