

ARMY AND NAVY RATIONS

JANUARY 11, 1926.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. QUIN, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 16077]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to which was referred H. R. 16077, a bill to amend section 40 of the act approved February 2, 1901 (31 Stat. p. 758), relative to rations, having considered the same report thereon with the recommendation that it do pass.

This measure proposes to place the Army ration on an equality with the ration for the Navy. From the testimony before the Committee on Military Affairs by the Secretary of War and officers from the War Department it was clearly and conclusively shown that all the men in the armed forces of this country should be fed on an equal basis.

In support of the measure extracts from the committee hearing are made a part of this report, in order that the Members of the House may be made acquainted with the sentiment expressed by the Secretary of War, the Chief of Staff of the Army, and the Quartermaster General of the Army, in all of which your committee concur.

These extracts are:

Secretary DAVIS. The Quartermaster General, of course, can give you the details in regard to the ration, and I suppose you want from me just a general statement about the importance of it.

I think the question of the proper amount, quality, and kind of food that men get is of vital importance in any line of activity and particularly so in the military service, and also the question as to whether the men in the Army are getting the same ration, comparatively, as the men in the other armed services.

The ration, as you know, at the present time, in the 1928 Budget, is based on the figure of 35.74 cents, and the actual cost of the ration to-day is on the basis of 36.12 cents. That is too small, I think, as shown by the fact that in practically every case I know of where any funds are available (company funds or post exchange funds, or anything of that sort), they are actually being used and have been used for years in supplementing the ration. It does not seem to me that is a fair proposition. In other words, the profits of these post exchanges and similar funds are really taken from the men themselves and, if those profits are put back into the feeding of the men, they are actually paying a certain part of their own food cost.

The fact that we have a very low ration has a bad effect on the morale, generally, I think; it naturally would have that effect. It is inefficient, because the company officers, the men who are directly in charge of feeding the men,

have to devote a great deal of their time and a great deal of their ingenuity in trying to piece out the ration and do everything they possibly can to make the ration as good as it can be made under the circumstances, and I know, from my own personal experience as a company officer, it does take a good deal of your time, thought, and energy that perhaps should be devoted to other things.

The situation is unfortunate in having a different ration for the Army from the Navy and Marine Corps; because, of course, in a great many cases, at least, two of the services and sometimes three of the services are quartered very close to one another and in that way the soldier feels he is discriminated against if he sees the men in the other service getting a very much better ration than he has.

I think the Navy ration is something like 55 cents and the Marine Corps is perhaps slightly less—54 and something, I think. The influence of that difference is of course very bad for the morale of the soldier, because he feels he is not getting as good treatment as the sailor or the marine.

I believe it is a very important question and am very glad your committee has taken it up. The Quartermaster General and the Chief of Staff are here if you want to ask any questions about the details.

Mr. QUIN. Mr. Secretary, you will back up this measure if the committee reports this bill out? Your department backs up this bill, I understand, and we can say that on the floor of the House?

Secretary DAVIS. We believe the rations should be increased; I do not believe there is any question about it.

General SUMMERALL. Speaking to the committee, I feel a great obligation to speak for what I believe the Army would say for itself from its own convictions and from my associations with it.

In coming through all the grades in the service—for a number of years I was a company commander or battery commander—I had to deal with this problem of feeding my men. I was never able to feed them on the ration in any manner which would conduce to their well-being or happiness. I found that they responded more quickly to good food and good living than to any one of their conditions of living. It was my greatest problem not to train or discipline, or to carry out the ordinary military requirements, but to feed my men. As a captain, I was compelled to resort to every subterfuge I could find to raise money to add to the mess. I sold everything I dared to sell, as junk, and was compelled to use a considerable per cent of my men and overhead to carry on such activities as gardens, chickens, cows, and so on, to eke out the mess. The labor was worth while and brought an abundant return in increased contentment and efficiency of the command.

* * * For several years I have placed on my annual report, after my inspections, an urgent recommendation for an increase in the ration. These conditions were emphasized in Hawaii, where my men lived in close proximity to the Navy, who were very much better subsisted and, as I believe, with a corresponding improvement in morale and discipline.

* * * I am thoroughly in favor of the increase in the ration as contemplated by the bill, to the equivalent of the Navy ration, under like conditions of living. I believe it is essential and will bring an abundant return in reducing desertions, in increased morale and discipline, and in efficiency.

General CHEATHAM. I want to say in general that I do feel the Army ration should be increased.

Mr. FISHER. Is there any evidence to show that the boys and young fellows in the Navy and Marine Corps are overfed under the ration that is given them?

General CHEATHAM. Not to my observation, sir.

Mr. GARRETT. Do you think that the Army men have been underfed with the ration they had?

General CHEATHAM. It was shown, Mr. Garrett, before you came in, sir, that the Army itself, the enlisted men, through some source other than governmental, increased the ration by 18 per cent from the post-exchange funds and from other private funds furnished by the soldiers themselves.

Mr. GARRETT. And but for that, they would have been underfed; is that the idea?

General CHEATHAM. The question of underfed is a rather difficult one. They would not have starved. The components of the ration have a certain definite number of calories which will keep you in good health, but there is not the variety; there is not the progress in the standards of living which the rest of the country has built up to, and the ration is not satisfactory; it is not a pleasing ration to the palate.