

HONG KONG NEWS CAUSES ANXIETY THROUGH QUEBEC

Believe French-Canadians Locked in Battle Many Soldiers From New Brunswick Present

Quebec, Dec. 23. — (CP) — Announcement from Ottawa that Canadian casualties in Hong Kong were "heavy" was received calmly to-day by anxious residents of Quebec province.

Ever since strong Japanese forces gained a foothold in the British crown colony, families in every part of the province who have a husband, son or brother in the Royal Rifles of Canada, a Quebec city unit, have been hoping for the best but expecting the worst.

Saint John, N.B., Dec. 23. — (CP) — New Brunswick soldiers comprise approximately 50 per cent. of the Royal Rifles of Canada, fighting against Japan's invasion of Hong Kong, it was learned from military sources to-day. The regiment finished its recruiting in New Brunswick and was stationed for a time at Camp Sussex and Saint John.

Most of the New Brunswick men came from the North Shore and King's county, with some from Saint John, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

(The announcement was what had been expected, but it brought

further anxiety for the parents and kinfolk. They realized communications with the colony have been intermittent since the heavy fighting started four days ago and because of that fate of the men may not be known for some time.

News of the casualties was tempered by the heroic defence the men are making on the strategic little island.

Until last night official secrecy forbade publication of the names of the Canadian units in the Far East, but it was no secret to the thousands who knew the men fighting there.

Veterans of the last war and youths just old enough to enlist were among the men from Quebec City, the eastern townships and even the Gaspé coast who chose to do their part for the Empire in the ranks of the Royal Rifles Regiment, which can trace its origin back to 1862.

The regiment trained here and at Debert, N.S., and was stationed for a while in Newfoundland. The men returned to Canada from Newfoundland in October and were allowed home on leave. Then they left again and were reported on their way back to Newfoundland, but November 15 announcement came that they had landed in Hong Kong.

Even as the Japanese struck, parents were receiving messages of "all well and safe" at Hong Kong.

When the unit left Canada its officer commanding was Lieut.-Col. W. J. Home, who enlisted in the permanent force in 1913 as a private.

Born in Quebec, Col. Home at 44 is believed to be one of the youngest O.C.'s in the Empire forces.

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