

of some of my colleagues in the affairs of this department, the Contract branch has been very much hampered and practically blocked; delays have been very prolonged; the cost has been greatly enhanced and the goods supplied have been, in many cases, inferior. Indeed, the most ardent agents of the German Government could scarcely have been more successful in holding up the proper equipment of our forces, had they been in control.

As one of many specific examples. Take the trucks for the Second Division. They should have been ready last December, they are not ready yet. Some of my colleagues constituted themselves champions of this or that truck and brought about delays whereby untried trucks would be purchased; high prices would be paid in commissions to agents, and the Government, and the country, would be treated practically as a retailer. My policy, as you may remember, in this and in all other matters, was to force dealers to give the Government wholesale, or manufacturers' rates.

At the present time there are upwards of one hundred requisitions that have long been in. The Quartermaster-General has over and over and over again, until his heart has grown sick, brought them before me, they have been promptly passed on to the Director of Contracts, and the great majority of them, when passed on to the Privy Council, have been held up in Council, or by the Treasury Board, laid aside or sent back—but always delayed; while the Director of Contracts and his officers have unceasingly been interfered with, delayed, and given endless and unnecessary work by the sub-committee.

I saw, by an article in the Free Press, that it is current everywhere among the soldiers and officers, that they are short of nearly every class of equipment and supplies. In fact, three times recently I have been severely reproached about shortages in supplies and equipment, by outsiders who had learned of these shortages from soldiers and officers of the force.

Further, to my surprise, I was spoken to in Montreal this week, and informed that our Medical units going over were only half equipped, while many of our combatant units are not properly outfitted.

In addition to the serious aspect of the case and from the viewpoint of the efficiency of our soldiers, there is the disheartening side. It is not only unfair to the gallant boys, who are giving and willingly risking their lives for the cause, and making domestic sacrifices, but it is absolutely unjust to me and my officers.

Therefore, as Minister of Militia, I must respectfully enter my protest, as I have frequently before entered it, at the interference and delays caused in all these things. It tends, not only to the injury and inefficiency of our soldiers, thus jeopardizing the success of British arms, but it must politically reflect seriously upon the Government.

It is charged that the sub-committee have given contracts for soldiers' clothing to be made by jobbers, who sub-let them and never entered a stitch themselves. Women's linen underwear, women's blouse makers, women's corset makers and truss makers, have all been among these contractors.

We believe, we are in a position in this department to truthfully say that there never was such a volume of business so successfully and economically transacted, or under such an efficient system of purchase and inspection, as had been developed by us up to the time when I went to Europe, and when the sub-committee took control.

I feel very fortunate in having under me officers, both civil and military, in all the leading departments, in whom I can place absolute trust. They have done nobly, under very adverse surroundings, and I can conceive of no plan by which the work could have been more honestly, economically and effectively done, than was ours.

I regret to have to submit these facts once more, but in justice both to myself, as well as to the splendid gallant soldiers we are endeavouring to equip for the front, I must ask your serious consideration of these matters.

I have but one desire, the upbuilding of Canada, the

Empire and humanity.

Let me hope that you will regard this letter as written with due respect to myself, to my country, to you, as my leader, and in justice to our soldiers.

Faithfully,
(Sgd.) Sam Hughes.

Was there ever a more serious charge made than that made by the Minister against his colleagues? A few weeks delay in the supplying of this equipment may have cost our soldiers thousands of lives. Trucks which should have been ready in December, 1914, were not ready on May 13th, 1915, due to the fact that Ministers of the Crown could not determine the sort of truck to purchase or the commission which should be paid to agents. Necessary equipment for the soldiers had been held up for months. In short if German agents had been in control they could not have been more successful in holding up these supplies than this sub-committee of the Council.

We ask our readers if this whole thing is not too horrible to intelligently conceive of, and we ask ourselves if this is an example of the mismanagement that has been going on from the time Canadian soldiers first started to enlist? Surely these accusations are worthy of the most serious and thorough investigation.

WHY AMERICAN HORSES?

The British Remount Commission with headquarters in Montreal has for sometime been purchasing horses for the British and Canadian authorities. About November 15th, 1916, this Commission ceased purchasing horses in Canada and since that date has been buying horses in the various large cities of the United States. It is understood that about 2,000 horses per week are so purchased in the United States.

No official of the government seems to be able to say why American horses are purchased in preference to Canadian horses. It is stated on reliable authority that there are in Canada for sale thousands of splendid army horses. With the sacrifices being made by Canada and the Canadian people one would naturally consider that Canadian horses would be given the preference.

It is not the first instance where a Canadian product has been rejected and an American one accepted.

LATER:

On February 5th, 1917 the Right Honourable Sir Robert Borden read a statement in the House in regard to the purchase of Canadian horses by the British remount officers. This statement was prepared by Sir Charles Gunning, British Remount Commissioner, Montreal, and is as follows:—

"Am not purchasing horses in Canada at present time. No horses purchased in Canada since December first. Average number per week of horses now being purchased in United States nineteen hundred. No horses being purchased at Des Moines or Indianapolis. Number of horses purchased in Canada between March and November, 1916, six thousand and seventy-nine. Number of horses shipped from Canadian ports during 1916, thirteen thousand three hundred and ninety-six. I do not purchase in Canada during winter months as climatic conditions are such that it is impossible to keep horses in the open, which it is necessary to do for about five weeks to ensure being fit for shipment. It is my intention to resume purchasing in Canada in the spring. The British Remount Officers are in Montreal."