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## A REPLY TO FINANCIAL TIMES: November 23rd 1918.

We always appreciate criticism that is either instructive or constructive, but the adverse criticism upon the town of St. Johns which appeared in the columns of the "Financial Times" November 23rd, 1918, appears to us to exceed the bounds of good taste. Let us examine the Genesis of the writer of the article in question who describes himself as a 'Repatriated Soldier'.

He comments in no unsparing terms upon the township and the physique of the men. Having arrived, presumably from the U.S.A., he speaks in no uncertain terms about the defects of the City. Does he realize that we have been at war since 1914 and whilst his country was making money out of the conflict and amassing wealth, we in Canada were spending of our wealth to prosecute with vigor the great campaign; consequently the bulk of public improvements was suspended because essential materials were required for the equipment and upkeep of the armies in the field? We therefore had to do without these. Secondly, our manhood went overseas and St. Johns added its quota to the rest of Canada, so that, first, want of material, second, paucity of available labouring men explain very largely the bad condition of the St. Johns streets.

He comments upon the arrangements for the comfort of the soldier. Let us say right away the object of the Depot is to prepare and fit the men for the strenuous conflict overseas and the nearer these conditions approximate to those overseas, the better it is for the men. Essentially the soldiers are there to learn the whole business of a soldier and that in the shortest possible time without having Y.M.C.A. Reading Rooms, and Rest Halls placed all over the place.

I am afraid that the "Repatriated Soldier" is one of those individuals who is the bane of both officer and N.C.O. that is a perpetual grouser. Let me state that so far as this Depot is concerned the wants of the soldier have been anticipated in every respect—a first class canteen is maintained and run by the E. T. D. where almost everything from a button to a wrist watch can be obtained at a reasonable cost. Refreshments of all sorts (excluding alcoholic drinks) can be obtained and an admirable ice cream parlour is attached to the canteen, during the summer months. Open air Cinema entertainments were given, and since October the Market Hall, (which has been kindly lent by the people of St. Johns,) has been used nightly, where cinema shows and concerts are given free to the soldiers. Besides that, through the courtesy of Rev. Major Moore the "Baldwyn Hall" attached to St. James' church was placed at the disposal of the soldiers nightly as a reading and writing room. Unfortunately this hall was recently destroyed by fire. In this Hall was a good stock of literature always at the disposal of the soldiers. The Victoria Hall has also been placed, fully provided by the Methodists for the soldiers.

The writer has had considerable experience in the Canadian camps at Bramshott, Whitley, Shorncliff and Seaford in England, and can say that in all essential details the comfort and care of the soldier was, and is looked after just as well as in any of the camps. But suppose they were not, why blame the good people of St. Johns. Why should they mother and father every soldier that passes through St. Johns. Ought they not to be a charge to the whole of Canada and

not just one small community. The Daughters of the Empire, the Canadian Red Cross, and other kindred organizations, look after the upkeep of the Camps in England, but here in St. Johns, without any aid from these organizations, I assert the comforts of the soldiers are just as well looked after as over there. It is to be regretted that the "Repatriated Soldier" had not the privilege of experiencing the discomforts of soldiering overseas. Surely he must have imagined when he left his home in the U.S.A. and its sweet comforts that he was going on a Sunday School picnic, and not to a life and death struggle. I am afraid that in his case 'a little knowledge is a dangerous thing'. Then the cheap sneer at the physique of the men that he saw left in St. Johns—Does he realize that whilst he was safe in the U.S.A. and enjoying the benefits of life there, the country of his birth was engaged in a life and death struggle for its very existence. The men of Canada, among whom are included the men of St. Johns, were away fighting his battle, to turn around and sneer at those left behind ill becomes one who was so tardy in coming forward to do his undoubted duty. It would have been better had he omitted the sneer—his plaint would have been more weighty then, but I much fear that his article was only a peg for someone else to hang his hat upon, because in another column of the same issue another scribe rushes into the fray with an attack upon the Depot itself. "The voice is the voice of Jacob but the hand is the hand of Esau." The cat being out of the bag and scratching around, we see plainly what the scratching is about. "Get after the E. T. D., get it fairly if you can but get it" is evidently the motto of this journalist.

He states that he visited St. John's some four or five weeks prior to writing the article, and the scenes he describes, fills one with wonder. He would have his readers believe that life in St. John's, so far as the soldier is concerned, was one drunken orgy; and his soldier friend stated that after 10 or 11 o'clock, he would see hundreds of soldiers, in various degrees of demoralization. His soldier friend was either deliberately lying, or else he was filling this scribe with hot air; because, unless a special pass is issued, all the soldiers have to be in barracks before Tattoo to answer their names, if they do not, they are marked down as absentees, and are brought before their Company Commanders and punished. The Tattoo roll is called at 10.15 p.m. He asked, Could he see the Barracks; and his mentor said, Yes, but leave the Ladies behind. The innuendo being perfectly obvious, the men were not to be trusted when ladies were about. This is a deliberate insult to every person in the Depot. The members of the Engineering Training Depot, with all their faults, are at least Gentlemen; true they are not plaster paris saints, nor yet do I anticipate that many of them are sprouting wings, but they know how to treat ladies; now what was the reason? That Ladies were not admitted some six or seven weeks ago; Did this Gentleman, who handles a muck rake so gracefully, know that there had been an epidemic at St. John's and also at Montreal, and that the Medical Authorities, to prevent the spread of infection, closed the Barracks to the general public? The information may be somewhat belated, but proper inquiries would have established the fact the time of the scribe's visit, and it would have saved him maligning and insulting an earnest body of men, who evidently have more patriotism, both local and national than he has. Then he was told the dishes used by the soldiers were thick with grease, etc. I want you to note the number of things this gullible person was told. He was told, that soldiers were demoralized between 10 and 11 p.m. He was told, "That he had better leave the ladies behind when visiting the barracks." He was told "the dishes were thick with grease," and because he is told these things, he did not understudy the angles, but like the other parties, he rushes into print. In any English Court, heresay is not evidence. We would like to know why this attack at the eleventh hour was delivered. What is the motive? We can safely say that the dishes, tables and food handed to the men in the Mess Hall will bear comparison with any other Depot on this Continent, or in England. This is not heresay, but an absolute fact. Our scribe lifts his hands to Heaven in holy horror at the vision which a diseased imagination has conjured up before him, and in pious wrath, he asks, "What are you going to do about it?" He demands that some one's head should be presented to him as charger. Well when he has something real to investigate at the St. John's Depot, we will be delighted to help him any time he calls. The only thing that we would ask of him is this, "If coming along, come direct to the barracks, don't take in the Bar rooms before you arrive, or else you will be seeing more visions, and dreaming more dreams."