

## EQUIPPING THE CANADIAN CONTINGENTS.

UNDER the heading "Troops Being Sent From Canada Without the Proper Equipment Owing to Slowness of Ministers," the Ottawa Free Press on May 11th, published a news item which is reproduced herewith. The gravity of the statements made must be apparent to every reader. They call for explanation from the Government, and not only explanation but a definite assurance to the people of Canada that such a state of affairs is being cleared up. The *Free Press* article is reproduced in full:

The Second Canadian Overseas Division is being sent to Europe without proper equipment. Since the Prime Minister's office announced that an election is not being considered attention can be called to a flood of complaints from all parts of the country without partizan motives being alleged. For the last six months there have been protests by commanders of corps training in every province of Canada that they were without sufficient equipment to enable their men to be properly developed. In Ottawa the engineering corps has voiced this complaint from day to day until it has become a matter of public notoriety. Requisitions for supplies, demands, pleas and complaints brought no result and finally this force was sent from the country without the tools which they require in order to do the work expected of them in Europe.

Hospital corps have had the same experience. They were mobilized and ordered to drill without essential articles and they were sent across the ocean without the drugs, instruments and essentials they require in order to establish hospitals and care for Canadian sick and wounded.

Second division artillery have had the same troubles and have voiced similar complaints.

### Won't Deny Conditions.

The militia headquarters is silent in regard to this condition of affairs, but it has existed so long and complaints have been so generally made that neither the Minister of Militia nor anyone else in authority will deny that this condition exists.

It is understood that as soon as the Prime Minister returns from his fishing trip that pressure will be brought to bear to have the deadlock broken and the force speedily furnished with the essentials which they require.

The first overseas division was completely equipped. This was done from stores which the department had on hand, and through rush orders given in most cases to experienced army contractors. Even with the first division there were troubles which have become public property, but they were minor matters compared with what has been happening in the case of the second division.

### Cabinet Responsible.

The business of purchasing supplies for the troops has been taken largely from the hands of the militia authorities. The bill voting the first fifty millions for defence forbade the department to spend more than five thousand dollars without first obtaining the approval of the whole cabinet. This was enacted in the early days of Valcartier. The whole govern-

ment was responsible for all the supplies purchased for that camp and the force despatched from there.

Soon after this restrictions were strengthened. A sub-committee of the government was appointed to purchase war supplies. Sir George E. Foster, Hon. Thomas White, Hon. Robert Rogers, Hon. J. D. Reid, Hon. Frank Cochrane, Hon. A. E. Kemp and Hon. Judge Doherty were the most conspicuous members of that committee. Patronage lists were drawn, party friends were favored and the system of open competition by tender was abandoned. Experienced contractors for war supplies were cut off and orders were placed with men and firms who had never made a uniform.

### In Corset Factories.

Orders for uniforms were placed with firms whose business was the manufacture of corsets, of ladies' blouses, of women's underwear. The results were not satisfactory to the military authorities who were offered inferior articles and had to put up with delays, nor, in many cases, to the contractors, who made garments which the inspectors would not pass. Many of them suffered severe losses.

At the close of the last session Sir Robert Borden promised that the hundred million dollars voted for this year's war work would be spent by an independent commission of business men whose prominence would place them above suspicion.

The commission named some weeks ago consisted of Hon. A. E. Kemp, a member of the sub-committee of the cabinet; of Mr. Lapointe, a prominent wholesale grocery and liquor dealer of Montreal and of Mr. Galt, a prominent wholesale grocery and liquor dealer of Winnipeg.

They were very deliberate about meeting and when they met found themselves confronted with a mass of requisitions for articles for the troops. The requisitions, in many cases, had been before the government for months without action having been taken owing to differences over details and over the politics of the persons who were to get the orders.

### Meet Twice a Week.

For some time the new commission has been holding brief meetings twice a week. It is learned that they have done little. One of the requisitions is for sixty thousand pairs of army boots on the new design, for which a maximum price of four dollars a pair was fixed. The commission did not advertise for open competition, but placed themselves in communication with certain dealers. They have been held up and have exceeded the price fixed. They have placed some orders for boots at \$4.10 and others at \$4.25 a pair, but none at \$4, and some of the leading boot makers of Canada have been left out altogether in the distribution of orders.

It is declared that for some weeks the commission should be sitting almost night and day every day of the week to deal with the situation which is confronting the force which Canada is despatching to the front. Two meetings a week are said to be entirely inadequate.