

CANADA

House of Commons Debates

OFFICIAL REPORT—REVISED EDITION

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Speaker: HON. ALBERT SÉVIGNY.

Monday, February 21, 1916.

The House met at Three o'clock, the Speaker in the Chair.

REPORT.

Report of the Militia Council for the year ended March 31, 1915.—Sir Sam Hughes.

DISTURBANCES AT CAMPBELLTON.

On the Orders of the Day:

Mr. MARCIL: On the 14th of February I inquired of the Prime Minister, in the absence of the Minister of Militia, as to disturbances among the soldiers at Campbellton, which I understood, from a paragraph in the Campbellton Graphic, had taken place. The right hon. the Prime Minister replied that he would have the matter looked into, and on the 16th instant the Minister of Militia said:

The hon. member for Bonaventure (Mr. Marcil) brought up a matter concerning Campbellton to which I referred yesterday. I have the facts, as stated by the officer in command, Colonel Mersereau, who says that on no occasion since the troops have been in Campbellton have there been more than four men locked up or impounded, or under supervision, in any one day, out of 290 men present. I merely add without comment that we hear all sorts of stories about the volunteers.

I have now before me a copy of the Campbellton Graphic of the 17th instant, containing an apology for the statement it made, and, as a matter of justice to the soldiers, and in the interest of fair play, I think I should read this to the House, as well as a letter from the Mayor of Campbellton on the subject. Campbellton has done very well in recruiting; several hundred men have enlisted, not only from Restigouche, but from the adjoining counties of Gaspé and Bonaventure, and practically every parish has supplied men.

The apology in the Campbellton Graphic reads:

We wish to apologize to the large majority of the members of "A" Company of the 132nd Battalion for a statement which appeared in our columns last week. This was to the effect that over twenty members of the Company had been lodged in the guard room for disorderly conduct. We may state that the information was given us, and was general about town at that time.

We are glad to learn from Capt. McKay that only four men were in the guard room at one time and these were the ones which made all the trouble. The members of "A" Company as a whole, are considered a fine lot of boys, but as we stated last week, there are always a few who forget themselves. We are glad to know that the number was less than reported, and cheerfully make this correction. We hope "A" Company will keep up its good reputation of being the best soldiers in the Battalion, and that the unruly ones will be shown that it is an insult to the whole company to create such disturbances. It is also the duty of the sober boys to give every assistance to the officers and police in bringing to justice the parties who are supplying the soldiers with liquor.

The letter from the Mayor of Campbellton reads:

Campbellton, N.B.,

February 16th, 1916.

Hon. Charles Marcil,
Ottawa, Ont.

Dear Sir: The St. John Telegraph of the 15th instant quotes you as having made the statement that you were informed that some twenty-five soldiers in Campbellton, N.B., had caused a disturbance similar to that in Calgary.

It affords me considerable pleasure to be able to inform you that there is absolutely no truth in that statement. At no time since the 132nd Battalion began to recruit have there been any disturbances of any nature whatsoever, and to say that there has been rioting or other similar disturbances is an utter absurdity and a grave injustice to the young men whom we all should honour.

The members of "A" Company of the 132nd Battalion are as orderly a body or men as you will find in any barracks in Canada, and Campbellton is proud of them.

I trust, therefore, that in all fairness to these young men, you will, on the floor of the House, inform the members that you were mis-informed in regard to the soldiers in Campbellton, and that there is no truth in the report to which you gave publicity on the above mentioned occasion.