

SOLDIERS TELL THEIR SIDE OF STORY IN THE NORTHLAND INVESTIGATION

Ottawa, Jan. 3.—Practically the whole of to-day's sitting of the Northland inquiry was devoted to the soldiers' version. Generally speaking there was not the strength of complaint in regard to the quality of the food served as in the case of the officers' version, and the method in which it was served. Bunking accommodation, it was claimed, was inadequate.

"The bathing accommodation was bad," declared Corporal Higgins, of Stratford. "The men hadn't room to dress or undress and the floor was covered with sometimes an inch of water."

Just before adjournment in the afternoon there was evidence of stewards selling food to the men, contrary to regulations. The stewards had their price list, and were selling for W. A. Head, a Toronto soldier. It would be a couple of shillings for steak and chips, bread and butter and tea, or for four shillings, one might have chicken. Head had seen no price list but knew what it was, and during the trip, he paid probably two shillings a day to the stewards for food.

And was there a good, rushing business done day after day, he was asked, the commissioner. Judge Hodgins.

Oh yes, at certain times," he replied simply. "He knew it was selling the men should have to pay for food, but he did not mind. He knew it could not last for long and he wanted to get home."

"You were philosophic enough to look at it in that light," was the commissioner's comment.

Head said the following was an instance of supply: one half table-spoonful of jam, six pickles, a table-spoonful of jam, a slice of bread, about a half pint of tea or coffee.

For Christmas dinner, said another witness, they had one fat pork chop and Christmas pudding served out by hand instead of on dishes.

There were also charges made that fresh water was not available for washing or shaving.

When the Northland inquiry was resumed this afternoon Lieutenant Commander Williams, R.N.C.V., Naval Service Department appeared as representing the Admiralty.

Lieut. Vautelot, C.P.A., Montreal, was in charge of a party of men on the Northland. It was laid down in regulations, he said, that men were required to supply fatigues, fetch food and wash dishes. The stewards were supposed to do what they could and the men to help them.

Judge Hodgins: "Who was responsible for dishes not being removed from the table?"

The men were responsible and the stewards were to help them to the limit of their capacity, witness said.

Lieut. Vautelot said he had received complaints from men on the Northland that the food was insufficient in quantity. When the men got full rations it was about equal in quantity to rations served in the training camps in England.

"Do you mean that full rations were not served?" Mr. Orde asked.

"The stewards serve the food out of large pans. Too much was dish-ed out at the beginning there would not be enough for the men at the end."

Private W. A. Head, Toronto, former 20th Battalion, served fifteen months in France. He came back on the Northland but denied that he had ever said to a reporter that "there was nothing to eat on board."

He thought the men got very little to eat and that they did not get very fit.

"I got lots of good stuff, but I had to pay for it," he said. "Can anyone tell me that is good enough for men?" he asked sharply, out lining the following menu:

"One half table-spoonful of jam, six pickles, table-spoonful of this jam, slice of bread, with about one half pint tea or coffee."

"That was supper, he said, for over six nights during the trip. On the remaining nights they had, instead of salmon, two thin slices of bologna sausage."

"The men in his section would form up a line and get their rations from the galley, taking all on one plate. If they wanted more they would have to go to the end of the line and if there was any left when their turn came again they might get it."

"Did the supper you mentioned, Mr. Orde asked, "prove to be insufficient for most of the men?"

"Yes."

"On Christmas night after the orderly officer and chief steward had been around the men got about three times as much as they had usually been getting. Every one was satisfied."

As to the dinners, some fellows, Private Head said, could eat it all right. He could not eat turnips uncooked.

"Questioned at some length by Judge Hodgins, Private Head said the stewards had a price list of food they sold."

"You could get steak and chips, bread and butter and tea for two shillings," he said, "and roast chicken would cost four shillings."

"Were these things sold to the stewards?" the commissioner asked.

"Yes."

"Or were they sold by the ship?"

"The stewards got the money."

"Did you see the price list?"

"No, but I knew what it was."

"Did you make use of it and pay for things?"

"Yes."

"Were you aware that the stewards were forbidden to sell food?"

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