

OUR SOLDIERS AND THEIR DEPENDENTS.

The High Cost of Living.

"The man who is prepared to volunteer his services and to risk his life in his country's defence is entitled to first consideration. Those dependent upon him, and who spare him from their midst are the next most deserving of the State's solicitude and care. A policy which will accord first place to the soldier and sailor in the concern of the State, will I believe, bring forth all the men necessary to fight its battles without the need of recourse to conscription. If returned to power I should adopt such a policy."

"The measure now in force for the maintenance, care and comfort of the soldiers' dependents, and families, are not adequate or equitable. . . . Prompt action must be taken to put the soldier and their dependents beyond any possibility of want after public subscriptions have ceased and the glamour and excitement of the War have worn away."

Sir Wilfrid Laurier in manifesto delivered Nov. 5, 1917.

THE policy laid down and carried out by the Borden Government since the War commenced has been the direct antithesis of that embodied in the manifesto of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. The soldier and his dependents have ever been the last consideration of the Government; the profiteer and the food manipulator the first. The chasm which lies between the profiteer and the soldier is as wide as that which divided Dives in Hell from Lazarus in Heaven. Yet in Canada the relatives of the soldier at the Front must pinch to live and the returned soldier, shattered probably in his country's service, must limp the streets to seek a job; while the profiteer and his family safe at home live in affluence and spurn the dust of the street from the wheels of their motor car in the eyes of the man who limps.

The Rich Fatten while the Soldiers Fight.

The whole financial policy of the Government, in the first place, has been to make the War a "paying proposition" for those of its Big Business friends who remain at home. These men have shared orders, arising entirely out of the War, approximating a billion and a half dollars. The cost of the War so far approximates about half of that amount. In Great Britain and the United States the principle at the outset was laid down that those who benefit by the War shall help pay for the cost of the War and that so far as possible those who suffer in the War or by the War—the soldier and his dependents—shall be spared further sacrifice. It has been altogether different in Canada. Out of all the huge profits made from war contracts only an infinitesimal amount has been conscripted for the payment of the war expenditures—about fourteen million in the first three years of the War to be explicit. The War is being carried on by borrowing and by indirect taxes. The debt accumulated by the borrowing will be paid by the soldier when he comes back in common with all others. The indirect taxes bear as heavily in increased cost of living upon the poorly-paid dependent of the soldier as they do on the pampered and protected war profiteer with his 100 per cent dividends.

Borden Government Against Income Tax.

Sir Thomas White has ever been chary of direct

taxation. He was simply hounded by the Opposition into the imposition of an Excess Profits Tax. He was later hounded into the imposition of an Income Tax and the tax he did impose will sit very lightly on the shoulders of the men with big incomes who include himself and nearly all his colleagues. Moreover he stated that it would next year take the place of the Excess profit tax. Fear of "scaring capital" has ever been the plea of the Minister of Finance when urged to a further conscription of profit and accumulated wealth. In other words he always took the ground that men would not go into the munition or war supply business unless assured of substantial profits and the retention thereof.

Soldier's Dependents Suffer.

But the man at the Front who is asked to sacrifice all he has, must be content with a wage which in any other branch of War or domestic industry at home would be considered ridiculous and would create strikes. His dependents at home are asked to subsist upon an allowance which the family of a mechanic in these days would consider starvation wages. They are forced to move down the rungs of the social ladder and remove their effects to a cheaper part of the community, while their neighbors who have none at the Front remain where they are and the profiteer mounts to the very top of the social ladder.

Action of Government Discourages Men Going.

The Government has always feared "scaring capital" away from industry. It has never entered its mind that the policy pursued by it with regard to the subsistence of soldiers and their dependents may have "scared" many men away from the trenches, or disgusted other against going. Voluntary recruiting, the Government claims has failed! How far it may be asked has the Government's solicitude for its friends the profiteers and the food manipulators contrasted as that solicitude is with its miserable haggling over pension and allowances to soldier's dependents, been responsible for that so-called failure? It may be that the horror of the trenches to many men would be lightened if they could believe that their dependents at home were well cared for, and were not being ground to the dust by the food profiteer. It may be that many men have been made "slackers" by the present Government through fear of what may happen their families should they go, and through disgust against the saturnalia of profiteering which they witness among the favored friends of the administration who stay at home from the battle. If there be slackers in Canada the Borden Government must be held largely responsible for their existence.

"A policy which will accord first place to the Soldier and Sailor, and his dependents in the concern of the State", says Sir Wilfrid Laurier, "will, I believe, bring forth all the men necessary to fight its battle without the need or recourse to conscription. If returned to power I should adopt such a policy."

Had the Government made the soldier and the sailor and their dependents the "first concern of the