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## REGIMENTAL BANDS.

### A SHORT STUDY.

BANDS, THEIR ORIGIN, ORIGINAL, PRESENT AND FUTURE USE AS APPLIED TO EXPEDITIONARY FORCES IN THE PRESENT WAR.

Owing to the amount of controversy as to the "why" and "wherefore" of bands being organized and now broken up, this article is written as far as possible in an explanatory manner to give the men of this and other Battalions of the C.E.F. some idea of how the present disruption came about.—Corpl. R. G. HUMPHREYS, 67th Divisional Military Band.

As far back as history takes us, we learn that whenever a body of men, particularly soldiers, were mobilized either for peace or war purposes, they were always accompanied by musicians of some sort or other. Not particularly for marching purposes, but with the main idea of cheering up the men. To quote one specific use, the original inhabitants of our adopted country, *i.e.* Canada, the Indians, before proceeding to make war, in every instance had a general assembly, in the centre of which was stationed the band, composed of tom-toms and other native instruments, which regaled the company with stirring music and songs to instil courage for the forthcoming battle.

Different nations all have their bands for this same purpose more or less, and no doubt the music of our finest bands sounds as hideous to some nations as theirs does to us. Music is purely a matter of taste, environment and education.

To advance to music as it applies to European nations, we could fill several WESTERN SCOTS and then some more. But to get down to the idea of this article, we will now deal with bands as we know them in the C.E.F. and their forefathers the British Army, of which we might now consider ourselves part and parcel.

It is well known that a large body of men, when on the march for a long distance, travel quicker and with much less fatigue if accompanied by musicians, be it brass, pipes, bugles or fifes. This, then, is the main reason why bands were organized for use in the British Army and our C.E.F. To confine ourselves to brass bands, the British Army bands (Permanent Forces) are composed of 19 musicians and a Bandmaster. In times of war, these men are used as stretcher-bearers. If the band is augmented to 30 or more, the balance of the musicians are drawn from the ranks to do duty with the band, but, on declaration of war, they immediately return to their respective companies, and take up the ordinary duties of the rank and file.

We now reach our own C.E.F. and their bands. As each Battalion was recruited in different parts of Canada, bandsmen (not soldiers) were advertised for to form a band. Two or more officers of the regiment were generally appointed as a committee to attend to the working of the band, a Bandmaster appointed, and work commenced. In most cases where brass bands accompanied a Battalion, it was by request of the rank and file, with the necessary permission of the O.C. and officers.

To the uninitiated the expense of keeping up a brass band, with instruments, music, and a thousand-and-one other items necessary, seems enormous, but the writer of

this article, after some 15 years' service in military bands, is always willing to show expense is necessary to anyone interested enough in this all-absorbing topic.

To gather together the necessary instruments to complete the proper formation or balance of a band requires money, and in all cases to the best of our knowledge the officers and ranks subscribed freely, in most cases one day's pay, although we could quote one instance where three days' pay was given by each man of a Battalion, which Battalion, by the way, is not a thousand miles from Bramshott.

We now have our band formed, music, instruments, etc., subscribed for, and what returns do we get for our investment? In all cases when the Battalion proceeds on a route march, field day, etc., they are accompanied by the band playing martial and popular marches. On stated days, the bands give concerts for the benefit of the men, playing popular overtures, operas, songs, etc. At other stated times, they play for Officers' Mess, Hospitals, Sports, Church Services, Funerals, etc., etc., and on top of this have to find time for practice and the usual training to make efficient soldiers.

Now comes the topic of the day. Why are C.E.F. bands being disbanded? What status does an enlisted bandsman hold in an Expeditionary Force? What were the conditions under which he enlisted? What disposal will be made of him?

In the present war, owing to a thousand difficulties arising, it has been found impossible to use a band in the field. Only in a very few exceptional cases can a band be used, and that is at a base and around hospitals, where a little music is almost as essential to a patient's health as is his medicine. If a band accompanied a battalion into the trenches, they would be immediately located by the enemy, and the result would be anything but pleasant. Amongst other things, this is a war of "step lightly and speak softly," and any sounds more than are absolutely necessary are directly fatal to moving troops. Even the reflection from the band instruments would make an easy mark for the enemies' "sky eyes."

In all, there has been many battalions sent from Canada. Take each battalion as bringing one band composed of, say, 30 men. We then have hundreds of men in the Army, their original occupation gone through circumstances over which they themselves nor the powers that be have any control. What is to be done?

If we go back to the day of his enlistment, and glance at the attestation papers, we find clearly stated that the party signing agrees to serve His Majesty King George V. *anywhere or in whatever capacity he or his officers think fit to place him.* It is all very clear and very simple, and leaves absolutely no room for argument. Therefore, though we wrote from now until doomsday, the facts would remain the same.

We could put up many legitimate arguments in favour of the bandsmen being kept as bandsmen, but we all attested the same way, all read what was written thereon, and in fact we are "in the Army now," and the old saying still stands good, that "they can do anything to or with you in the Army but—"? We leave our readers to fill in the blank.