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Ross Rifle Tragedy Sequel Coming

Ottawa Government For Fourteen Months Failed to Provide Remedy—Army in Field Still Gagged

(Toronto Star.)

Ottawa, Dec. 18.—Following the publication on Saturday last in the Ottawa Journal of what is obviously a government-inspired exposition of the Ross rifle question, and in which the late Laurier administration is blamed for the contract entered into by the Ross Rifle firm, the Citizen this morning publishes on its editorial page an apparently well informed letter from "one who has returned," accompanied by an editorial, which says, in part:—

"They all know what happened in the 40th Battalion to mention one unit, and they all know the cause of the catastrophe fourteen months after the Ross rifle's failure at Ypres in April, 1915. Surely it is not contended that in giving the monopoly of rifle making to one firm the administration of the day (assisted by General Hughes) bound itself and its successors for all time to accept a particular rifle from such firm, whether defective or not."

Commenting on the government's defence in the Journal, "One who has returned" says:—

Had Conservative Support.

"It is right when it says that the Laurier government made a rotten bargain when the Ross rifle was foisted on this country, but the late government might well plead that it was led astray by the warm, even fierce, support given by the then opposition critics of matters relating to the Militia Department."

"However, let us get down to war times. When the first division left Valcartier everyone was more or less pleased with the Ross rifle, as far as target shooting was concerned, but experienced officers and men, who could not help noting its decided tendency to jam when rapid fire was ordered, were really apprehensive."

"When the division first went into the trenches near Arras, I understand that this alarming tendency was noted by all ranks. That was in February of 1915. Less than two months later came the second battle of Ypres. I have been told time and again, by different officers

and men of the horrible and heartrending experiences of great numbers of men who faced the oncoming Hun, who were still hundreds of feet away, with jammed Ross rifles, and pick up the Enfields of dead British Tommies."

"When the division was withdrawn from the Ypres fighting to rest and fill up to strength once more, the great topic of conversation among the survivors of the fight was the Ross rifle, and if ever anything was heartily cursed, it was, along with the government who had insisted on keeping this much criticized and much doubted weapon in the hands of the Canadian troops."

Still No Head to Protest.

"However, in spite of all protests which could not have failed to have (unofficially at any rate), reached the ears of Sir Robert Borden and his associates—nothing was done. Then came the fight at Givenchy and Festubert and the same shocking and heartrending scenes were gone through again. From then on the Ross rifle fairly stank in the nostrils of the Canadian division."

"When the second Canadian division and the corps troops came to France in September of 1915, they brought Ross rifles with them—this in face of all that had transpired. But these rifles, one was assured, would be quite satisfactory, no more jamming. Oh, no, General Hughes had had the firing chamber reamed out in machine shops at Short'scliffe so that any old .308 cartridge would fit. Splendid!"

"Luckily there was a comparative quiet on the Canadian front from June, 1915, which lasted nearly a year. During last winter I left France, and eventually arrived in Canada in the spring of this year."

Protests Suppressed in 1916.

"Then came the wicked fighting around St. Eloi and Hooge in June. I was here then, and I often wondered how the boys with the reamed-out Ross rifles fared through that night. I have never heard details to this day; but in July I got a letter from a very well known officer, who has been out there in the thick of it since the first division crossed to France. It contained this disquieting sentence: 'I can never say another word for the Ross rifle after the horrible experience the 40th Battalion, which was armed with the Ross, went through in the second heavy fighting.' He could write no more, and I wonder the censor let even that pass."

"The men at the front are gagged and cannot write these things. That is as it should be, for it is military necessity. The officers and men returned to Canada to take up appointments here cannot be expected to speak out—they don't want to be hounded out of their jobs. But you could probably get some interesting facts from returned wounded, who have been discharged as medically unfit. The government has no longer a hold on them."

Fourteen Months' Guilty Delay.

"I often long to hear the details of what happened to the 40th Battalion last June. Some day we shall all hear. In the meantime the Journal can froth and fume and blame Laurier or the War Office or whoever else it likes. But the boys out there will not forget their comrades who died fighting with jammed Ross rifles in their hands, and, however hard the Journal and other newspapers may howl, the time is surely coming—after the war is won—when the soldiers of Canada who return will ask the present cabinet this terrible question: 'Why did you, after you heard of how hundreds of men died fighting or were taken prisoners at Ypres with jammed Ross rifles in their hands, why did you insist on keeping us armed with this rotten weapon for fourteen months afterwards?'"

"The Canadian army can't and won't talk while there is still work to be done, but, when the boys return, they will hear out what I have said, and will give all too many ghastly and specific instances. They will not forget and they will not forgive."

"ONE WHO HAS RETURNED."

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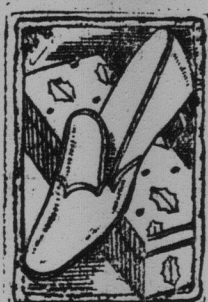
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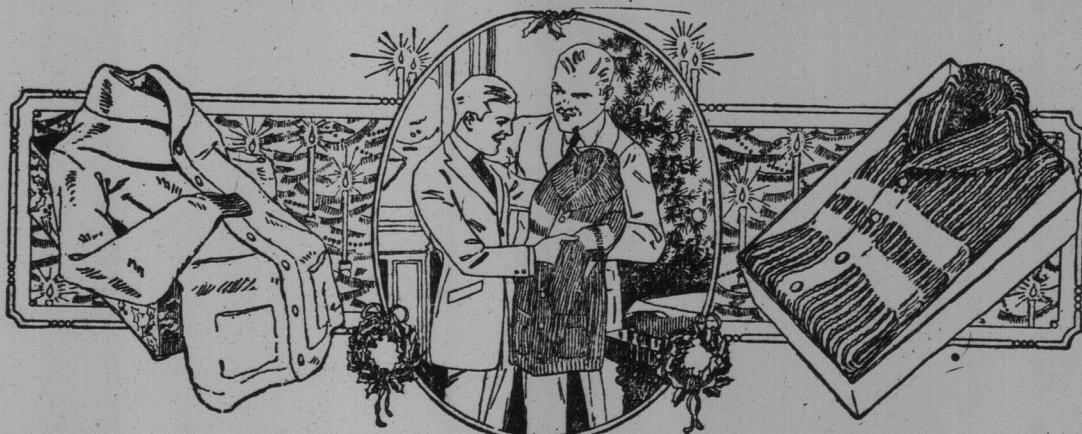
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SYSTEMATIC AID FOR POORER WOMEN

Toronto's Needy Women and Children are Being Well Cared For

34,314 Registered—Waste of City Funds to Be Obviated by Social Service Board

(Toronto Star.)

Toronto's poor women and children are getting more systematic care and attention, now that the Social Service Commission is properly operating its plan of a "clearing house" for all persons and families needing or receiving assistance.

Already there have been registered 34,314 persons or families, and 192 agencies for aid to the poor are reporting to this clearing house. Two and a half years of war has increased the woes of women, though many of the sex are now working in industrial and business pursuits who did not go to work before the war. By the registration method the commission cuts out the duplication which was formerly the curse of charity work in Toronto. Any person wishing to aid a supposedly needy family can now get reliable information concerning them by consulting the commission.

The latest report of the commission to the city council is that many applications are refused, investigation showing no need for relief. Many families are supported by relatives and private organizations rather than the city. "Gradually we are eliminating the burden of support of inmates who come from outside municipalities. Close investigation of expenditures in institutions and advice have, in a measure, reduced the cost of maintenance."

"The development of a home-finding department in the Children's Aid Society is progressing, so that children dependent in institutions and in boarding homes, may be properly placed with good families and supervised. "The Children's Aid Society is the only legal body to supervise and provide for the dependent child. This new development will remove the criticism which exists at the present time. "The development of a private organization which will handle relief of wid-

ows with children, and relief of certain families which should not be put on the city, is being carried out. This plan would remove children of widows from institutions and reduce the cost to the city of the care of such children in institutions.

"The outlook for the future, as planned by the Social Service Commission is given as follows:

"1. Outdoor relief which eliminates waste of the city's funds.

"2. Grants to institutions on the basis of the city's direct responsibility.

"3. A competent children's department under the Children's Aid Society

to deal with all dependent children in institutions and boarding homes.

"4. A private organization to deal with widows with children, and all families and individuals which should not be put on the city.

"5. Complete registration of all applications for relief either in institutions or in their homes."

CHEAP MONEY AFTER WAR

Wall Street Journals—Economists have come to the conclusion that there will be cheap money after the war.

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