

Militia Department after three years of war. Nor did he confine his criticism to previous Ministers of Militia. He told also of his failure to induce the Government as a whole to get men under the Militia Act and frankly stated that even now he could not understand why the Government had declined to apply that Act. No statement could possibly be more damaging to the Government of which General Mewburn is a member.

A flood of light is thrown on General Mewburn's exposure of the criminal mismanagement of the war by the men with whom he is now associated by the evidence given before the Parliamentary Committee on Returned Soldiers. Pull, patronage, stealing, and shameless graft have run riot in all branches of the Militia Department since the beginning of the war.

In his testimony before the Committee, Mr. J. W. Borden, Paymaster General of the Militia Department and the brother of Premier Borden, stated that he had been handicapped from the start in getting good men for the Separation Allowance and Assigned Pay Branch as he was obliged to select clerks from the lists sent him by the local Tory members. He asserted that all such appointments had to be made through the "local political chiefs" and that he was not at liberty to go outside and select competent men to do the work. Thus incompetent Tory hangers-on were placed in charge of the Separation Allowance and Assigned Pay Branch, and the interest of the soldiers and their families were secondary to political pull from the very beginning.

What followed is precisely what the Liberals have charged against the Borden administration.

Giving evidence immediately after Paymaster General Borden, the Auditor General, Mr. John Fraser, said that through incompetence and lack of system "hundreds of thousands of dollars" had been overpaid to persons who were not entitled to receive the money and that the matter of overpayments was so serious that he did not believe the amount overpaid would ever be ascertained.

Then Mr. Fraser told the Committee of "very serious leakages" that had occurred in connection with money refunded to the Militia Department and not accounted for. He had discovered that a large class of persons who had been sent cheques to which they were not entitled had afterwards been asked for a refund; that this had been made sometimes in cash, sometimes by money orders or cheques and that a lot of this money had never gone to the credit of the Receiver-General, but had been kept by the clerks who had received it. Mr. Fraser expressed a strong opinion that there should be some inquiry made into these stealings. The Borden Government made no inquiry and Mr. Fraser said he did not think it would be good business for him to spend \$500,000 or \$600,000 more in trying to do the work that ought to have been done properly in the first place.

But perhaps the most illuminating of all was Mr. Fraser's evidence about the doings in England of the Militia Department under Sir Robert Borden's management.

Describing the Pay and Records Office in London Mr. Fraser said that when he was there in December

last the office contained 2,500 able-bodied men, 1,700 being in the Pay Office alone; that a lot of them should never have been placed in the office; that they were incompetents and that it would have been cheaper for Canada to have paid them "to sit out on the sidewalk and leave the books alone." There were so many Colonels, Mr. Fraser said he was afraid to speak to a man lest he would give him the wrong title.

In withering terms Mr. Fraser told of the stupidity of applying a military system to the operation of what should be a business office. He stated that in the London Office they had "ranks," discipline and everything the same as if they were at the front fighting Germans instead of keeping books." He illustrated the working of the system by citing the case of an expert chartered accountant who was ranked as a "private" in the office and who on this account had to take instructions about matters of book-keeping from a Colonel who knew nothing about keeping books. The effect of this system cannot be better described than by using Mr. Fraser's exact words:—

"I am told that some of those chartered accountants brought from the front because they were experts became so disgusted with conditions that they purposely put their accounts wrong in order that they would be fired and sent back to the front again. They prefer being in the trenches."

Imagine what the conditions in the London office must have been when competent men would deliberately risk death at the front rather than stay there!

But that is not all. Proceeding with his testimony, Mr. Fraser told the Committee of the defalcations of "quite a lot of paymasters, some of them from Overseas." He specifically instanced the case of one paymaster who had stolen \$3,500.00. All that was done to this man was to discharge him and send him back to Canada. And then what? The defaulting paymaster being a good Tory was promptly given the rank of Colonel by the Borden Government and was placed in command of a new regiment. He has never repaid one dollar of the amount he stole. The Auditor-General said that he asked the Militia Department to deduct from the man's pay the amount that he had stolen, but the Department replied that they had no authority to do so, as they could not deduct from a Colonel's pay any money that he might owe as a Paymaster. The tax-payers of Canada will appreciate the nicety of this distinction when they are told that Mr. Fraser swore positively that the man's defalcation was well-known in the Militia Department, as the amount of it was clearly shown on the Militia books.

The question naturally arises what has General Mewburn or the Union Government done to stop the "hundreds of thousands of dollars" of overpayments, to check the stealing of refunds, to punish the guilty, to dismiss incompetents and send them to the front? These are matters of vital importance to the electors of Canada, because they affect not only the soldiers at the front, but also the welfare of the soldiers' dependents and families at home. What then has General Mewburn done?