

Ontario and her Returned Soldiers.

WHAT THE PROVINCE IS DOING.

Brig. General MANLEY SIMS Specially Interviewed for "The Beaver."

"Over 31,000 soldiers have already returned to Ontario from overseas, and to nearly all of them the Government of Ontario in one way or another extended a helping hand," is the statement to an interviewer by Brigadier-General R. Manley Sims, C.M.G., D.S.O., Agent-General for Ontario in the British Isles.

General Sims is able to add some interesting and up-to-date information concerning the Ontario Government's organisation for assisting the soldier who returns to that Province, and in considering these measures it should be remembered that Ontario sent overseas a total of over 200,000 soldiers to the War.

"The Soldiers' Aid Commission of Ontario, which is maintained by the Ontario Government, is," says the Agent-General, "the principal agency actively at work helping soldiers returning to that Province. Indeed, the Commission's practical interest in the returning soldier actually begins to operate even before he has reached Ontario. As soon as a ship carrying troops arrives in Canada, the officials of the Commission telegraph the names of the men on board to their several military districts. These lists of names (sometimes in the case of Toronto occupying an entire page of the evening papers) are published in the local newspapers two or three days before the men actually reach their destination. These published lists of the Commission are often the first information received by the relatives of soldiers of the impending return of their friends. They make possible the wonderful demonstrations of welcome publicly accorded to returning troops, which are at the present time almost a daily occurrence at Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, London, and other cities in Ontario.

"Immediately on his arrival in Canada each Ontario soldier received the following personal letter of welcome:—

"I am directed by the Soldiers' Aid Commission to express to you their pleasure at your return to Ontario, and likewise to congratulate you on the service you have been able to render to our King and country in the Great War, so vitally affecting the interest of the Empire.

"I can assure you that your services are highly appreciated, and on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario, the members of the Soldiers' Aid Commission will be pleased to be of assistance to you in getting you re-established in the community, and taking up such employment as you may feel yourself capable of.

"In order to assist the Commission in giving you a helping hand, I enclose a form containing certain questions, and would request you to fill in the answers and return to me in the enclosed envelope as soon as possible. I shall acknowledge receipt and take active steps to aid you in any way I can."

"Enclosed in this letter is a card bearing the address of the local Secretary of the Soldiers' Aid Commission in the city or town to which the soldier is going, inviting the soldier to apply to him for any help he requires.

As there are no fewer than 144 branches of the Commission in the various cities and towns of Ontario, it will be seen that the Province is well covered by the Government's organisation. Up to January 15th, 1919, the Commission had been in touch with 31,236 soldiers who had returned to Ontario. Of that number over 12,000 men, who had asked the Commission to help them find employment, had been placed in satisfactory situations. The majority of the soldiers who have returned to the Province up to the present time have found positions with their old employers, all the railways and many of the largest firms in Canada taking a pride in the fact that they will have a job waiting for any man who enlisted while in their service.

"I have already mentioned the fact that there are 144 local branches of the Soldiers' Aid Commission throughout Ontario," said General Sims. "In addition, there are no fewer than fifty-five Ontario Government Employment Bureaux actively at work. It will thus be seen that Ontario is particularly well provided with the necessary machinery for the successful re-establishment of the returned soldier in civil life.

"The Ontario Employment Service is administered by the Trades and Labour Branch of the Provincial Government, and like all other agencies established by the Ontario Government to help the soldiers, owes much to the personal interest taken in its development by Sir William Hearst, the Prime Minister. There is a clearing house in the Labour Building, Toronto, and zone bureaux in Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, London, Kingston, Sudbury, Fort William, and Port Arthur; and sub-zone bureaux in Brentford, Sault Ste Marie, Windsor, Peterborough, Kitchener, Walkerville, and St. Thomas. It will thus be seen that there is an employment office in close proximity to every discharge depot in Ontario. There are also farm labour bureaux in connection with the branch offices of the Department of Agriculture, which are situated in practically every county. If by any chance this net work of organisation should leave out any Ontario soldier, arrangements have been made whereby all the local post offices throughout Ontario will act as registration offices for any returned soldier seeking employment either in his own town or at a distance.

"During the past year 27,536 persons were placed in positions throughout Ontario by these offices."

Questioned regarding the prospects of soldiers' land settlement in Ontario, General Sims made the following interesting statement:

"When the war ended," he said, "Ontario was the only Province in Canada which had a Provincial Soldiers' Land Settlement scheme actually in operation. This settlement is situated at Kapuskasing in Northern Ontario, and at the present time there are eighty returned soldiers practically all of whom are living in their own houses on their own plot of 100 acres with 10 acres cleared. The whole scheme so far has been financed entirely by the Government of Ontario.

"As is well known, the Dominion Government, through the Soldiers' Settlement Board,

has extended its soldier settlement plans so as to include operations in all the Provinces. This being so, it was felt that there were reasons which made it undesirable to have two competing schemes in Ontario, one under the Federal Government control, and the other administered by the Hearst Government. The Government of Ontario has accordingly agreed to turn over their Kapuskasing scheme to the Soldiers' Settlement Board, who will henceforward deal with all applications from soldiers who desire to acquire farms either in Old Ontario or in New Ontario.

"What is being offered by the Board to returned soldiers who desire to farm in the older and long-settled districts of Ontario?" the Agent-General was asked.

"A soldier applicant is expected to have 10 per cent. of the cost of the farm he desires to acquire," replied General Sims. "The limit of value is placed at \$5,000. Say a man wishes to obtain a farm worth \$3,000. He would be expected to put up \$300, although in rare instances the Board has power to dispense with this requirement. The Soldiers' Settlement Board will advance the other 90 per cent. On top of that the Board will advance up to \$1,500 for the purchase of stock, implements, etc. Later on, if the improved farmer can borrow up to a further \$1,000. The repayments of the loan on the land are spent over twenty years or longer, at five per cent. interest. No interest payment is required on the loan for implements and stock for the first two years; thereafter the interest charged will be five per cent. From this I think it is clear that it is the intention of the Government of Canada to give every facility to the returned soldier who possesses the experience and ability to succeed as a farmer. These plans have not actually been incorporated in legislation, but they will be at the forthcoming Session of the Federal House. If altered at all, there is little doubt they will be amended only to make them even more helpful.

"In anything that will be done to assist soldiers to settle in Ontario the Provincial Government will co-operate to the utmost," said General Sims, in conclusion. The attitude of the Ontario Government towards the returned soldier was well expressed the other day by Sir William Hearst, the Prime Minister. Speaking in Toronto Sir William said: "The most important task before the people of Canada to-day is to return the men of the Army to civil life under such conditions as will secure for them a successful future. This is a task to which we all must set ourselves with earnestness and determination. We must not rest until every man who served in the Overseas Forces of Canada occupies as good a position as he did before the war, and, if possible, a better one."

UNION BANK OF CANADA.

The London Office of the Union Bank of Canada announces that Branches of the Bank have been opened in Altamont, Man.; Caledon, Ont.; Carruthers, Sask.; Carsland, Alta.; Charlton, Ont.; Coleville, Sask.; Dewar Lake, Sask.; Lowe Farm, Man.; McAuley, Man.; Lexsmith, Alta.; Stewart, Sask.; and also that the following Branches have been reopened:—Easton's Corners, Ont.; Jansen, Sask.; Toledo, Ont.

CANADA PROUD FOREVER.

The Dominion has made, for the cause of civilisation and its motherland, a great and signal sacrifice. Its record in the war is one of which its people may be proud forever. For the Canadian people it is a heritage of imperishable honor.—Boston Transcript.