

The Canadian Patriotic Fund

Its Objects, Methods and Policy

On August 4th, 1914, Great Britain declared war against Germany, the violator of Belgium and a power that had long threatened the peace of Europe. Immediately the forces and resources of the British Empire were placed at the disposal of the Mother Country and every preparation was made for a long and strenuous struggle. The burden that Great Britain was called upon to bear was colossal, but her overseas dominions unanimously determined that upon them, too, a fair share should fall. From Australia, New Zealand, India, South Africa, Canada and other parts of the Empire came offers of men, money, ships and supplies, and the enemy must have realized when too late that the bonds which bound these lands overseas to Great Britain were not the feeble ties that he had deemed them.

War had scarcely been declared before it was announced that Canada would at once raise a preliminary contingent which ultimately consisted of 33,000 men. As soon as this force left the shores of the Dominion, recruiting for a second contingent commenced, and to-day Canada is maintaining under arms 200,000 men.

Mobilization had hardly commenced, when there arose the question of providing for the wives and families of the soldiers during their absence. Not a few generous minded employers offered to continue to pay, in whole or in part, the wages of such of their employees as enlisted. This, however, only provided for a small proportion of the families of men who joined the colours and almost immediately cases of distress came under local notice. In several cities funds were inaugurated to care for families for which no other provision existed, and almost from the beginning assistance was given to many. It soon became evident, however, that while some districts could well provide for families within their boundaries, there would be other districts in which those equally deserving would be in danger of being overlooked. From this disparity of conditions arose the demand for a central, or national fund, that would consolidate and support local effort and step in where this proved insufficient. It was obvious, too, that only through the medium of a national fund could uniformity of relief be secured, and the large subscriptions of national corporations, such as banks and railways, be equitably distributed.

In answer to numerous requests, therefore, His Royal Highness, the Governor-General of Canada, took the initiative and the Canadian Patriotic Fund was organized with His Majesty the King as patron. It is a body corporate by virtue of an Act of Parliament and is empowered: "To collect, administer and distribute a fund for the assistance, in case of need, of the wives, children and dependent relatives of officers and men, residents of Canada, who, during the present War, may be on active service with the naval and military forces of the British Empire and Great Britain's allies." *See Appendix A*

From the preceding paragraph it will be seen that the Fund was not at first intended to do more than assist the families of soldiers and sailors while the latter were on active service. Afterwards it was determined to widen its scope and on February 16th, 1915, a Bill was accordingly introduced into the House of Commons authorizing the Canadian Patriotic Fund to afford temporary assistance to men invalidated home and to widows of men killed in action or dying on service. *See Appendix B.*

The Canadian Patriotic Fund is given power by its charter "to establish branches or local organizations throughout Canada, and to co-operate with