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# The Public's Duty In Repatriation



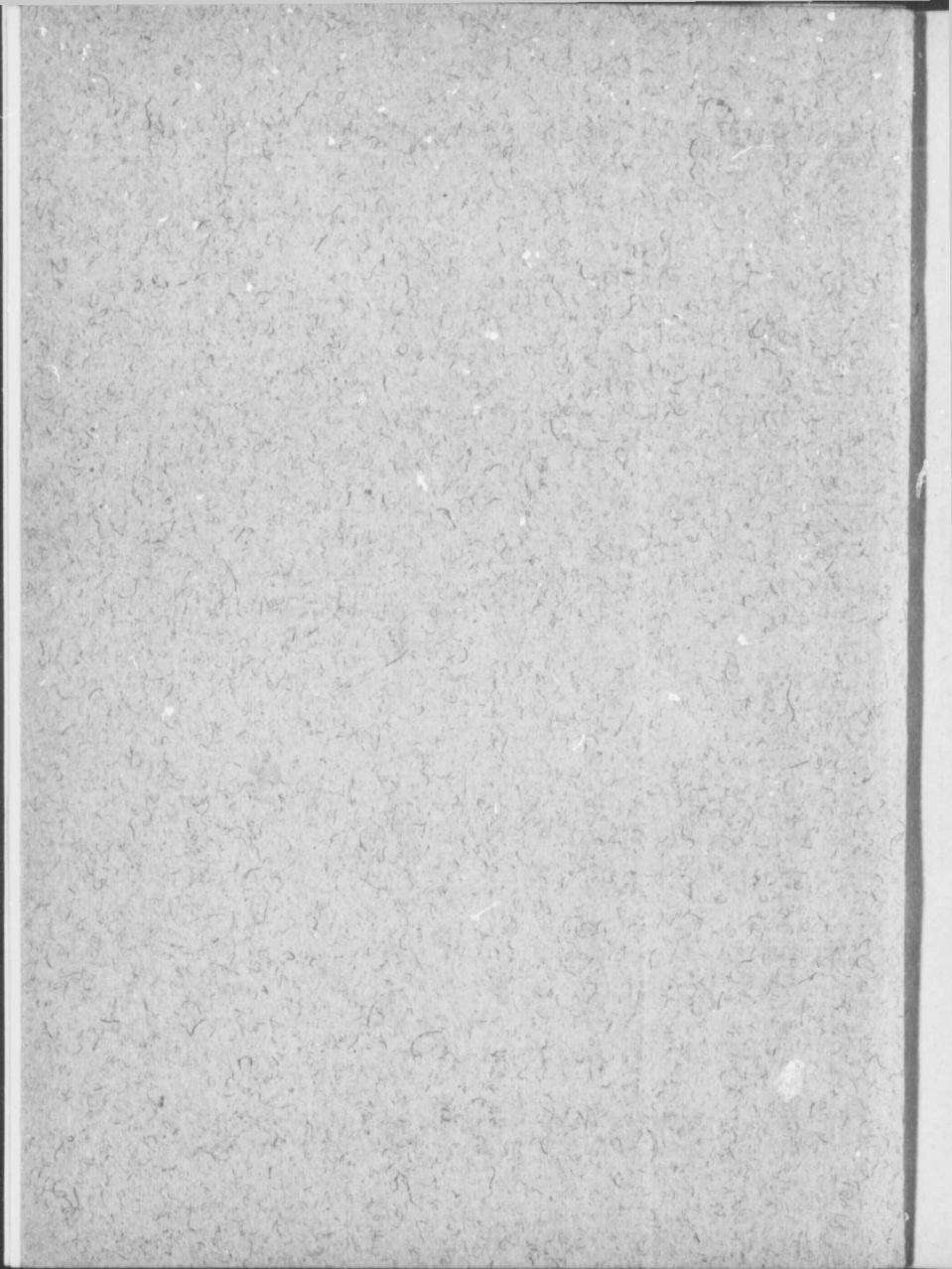
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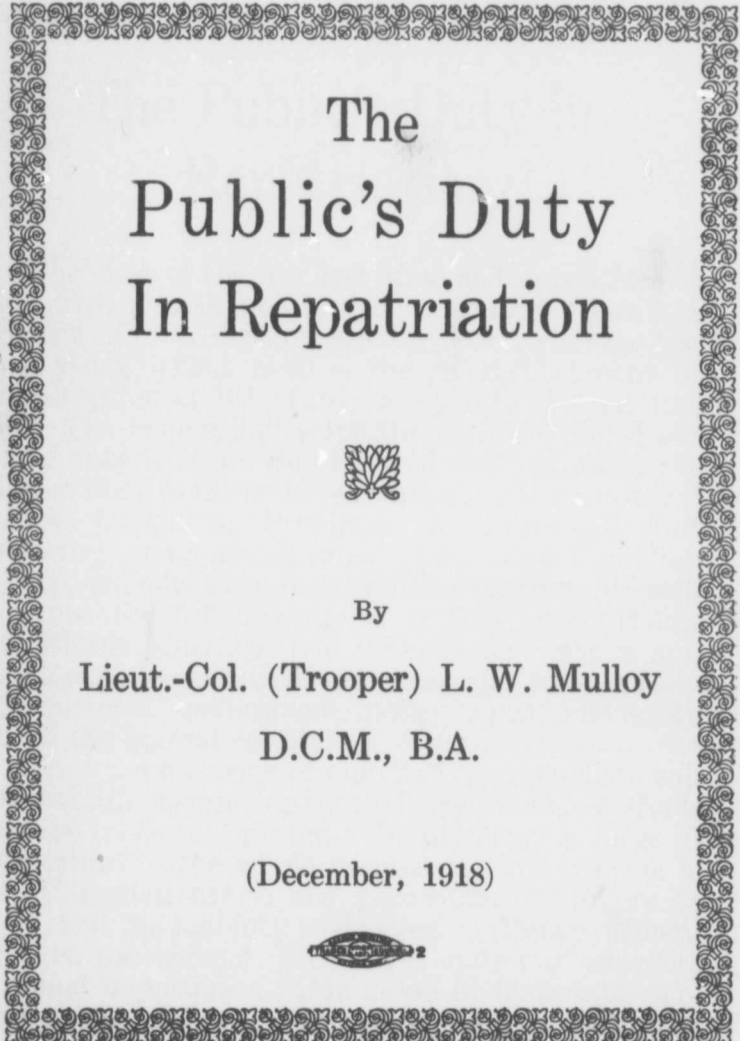
Lieut.-Col. (Trooper) L. W. Mulloy

D.C.M., B.A.

(December, 1918)





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# The Public's Duty In Repatriation



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# The Public's Duty in Repatriation

The close of the war has brought Canada face to face with a task not less in magnitude than the greatest of those accomplished by her during the last four years. That task is the re-establishment or re-absorption of her citizen army into the national life. The responsibility for the performance of our whole duty to those who have so well performed the highest duty to the state rests not alone upon governments—Dominion, Provincial or Municipal—but uniformly and squarely upon every adult Canadian citizen, including the re-established veteran himself. Without the full acceptance of this responsibility by citizens generally, and without their entire and intelligent co-operation, the best and most wisely administered government policy must inevitably fail of the highest results.

That the majority of our discharged soldiers will re-establish themselves by their own unaided efforts may be taken for granted. In any army so large in proportion to the whole population, however, as is the Canadian army, the percentage of failure is vital, and the inability to succeed of twenty, fifteen, or even ten percent, becomes a matter of supreme national importance. Our moral obligation to ourselves, the highest interests of the men, and the

future social and economic welfare of the state, all demand that the percentage be reduced to the most insignificant proportions. That the percentage can be reduced to below even that which obtained among the same men during pre-war days will not be denied by anyone who knows the mind of the ex-service man, his devotion to this country and above all his desire to win out or make good. Once re-established, he is not only a better employer, a better worker, or a better professional man than he was before, but through his training in subordinating his individual interest to that of the whole, is the most public spirited element in our citizen body. Nothing less, therefore, than complete success in the repatriation of our citizen soldiers should be our aim, and nothing short of complete success will discharge our responsibility. To succeed, however, we must as a people understand the nature of the problem, accept responsibility for its solution and co-ordinate our efforts in that direction. To declare there is no problem is to deny the teaching of both history and experience, while to admit the problem only to work at cross purposes, prescribe panaceas and adjudge blame, is to make failure inevitable.

### **Past Failures**

The respective records of successive generations of our forefathers when confronting the task of repatriating the men who had served them so valiantly, is proof that the task before us is one demanding our best effort. For illustration of previous failure we need not go back to the Napoleonic

or previous wars, when the ubiquity of the soldier beggar was proverbial and accepted as a necessary feature of the war itself or of its aftermath. We need only go back a little more than a single generation to the two great wars engaged in by Britain and the United States respectively during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, viz. the Crimean War and the American Civil War. The one is concerned only with men of the British Isles, the other solely with men of the United States.

Regarding the re-absorption of the veterans of the Crimean War, Mr. John Galsworthy of the Ministry of Pensions in Great Britain, asserts in a recent issue of "Reveille" that seventy-five percent of those gallant fellows ended their lives in a work-house.

Turning to the period subsequent to the American Civil War, the picture, though less disturbing, even when we include the pension scandals and irregularities, is scarcely more attractive. The archives at Washington and contemporary history furnish abundant evidence that a seriously large proportion of the discharged soldiers of the Union army did not become re-absorbed in the productive activity of the nation.

But it may be argued that the soldier of '56 and '66 had not the high average standard of education and intelligence of the men of to-day; that his pre-war life was not the same, while his method of training and actual war experience were quite different. All this is undoubtedly true, just as it certainly held true of the soldiers of a generation or more ago when compared with the soldiers of the Napoleonic era. When, however, it is remembered that the record of the Crimean and Civil War veterans is a replica, with but slightly varying detail,

of the record of the veterans of every great war in modern history, it seems to establish beyond controversy that the veteran experiences a temporary difficulty in re-adjusting himself to the conditions of civilian occupation, which, if not overcome, has a tendency to become permanent.

As to the nature of the handicap, ask any business man or employee who has been three months away from his work if he experienced any difficulty in beginning at once where he left off before his vacation or enforced absence. He will tell you that it took him from one week to a month to get "back into harness." Moreover, the greater the contrast between the life he lived during his absence and the life of the office or shop, the greater will be his difficulty in re-adjusting himself. Now it is evident that the business man's difficulty is not physical, but due entirely to changed habits of thinking, which upon his return must be re-adjusted to meet the needs of his office or business life. If then, we are to understand the temporary handicap of the man who is suddenly transformed from a soldier into a civilian, we should contrast the life he led as a civilian—which is the life to which he must return—and his life as a soldier, with particular attention to his habits of thought while in each of the rôles. What follows refers not to the officer but to the physically fit private, and more particularly to the private under twenty-five years whose mind may be said to be in its formative and hence receptive period.

### **Responsibility**

In civil life the young man had certain fundamental responsibilities common to mankind, viz.,



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the responsibility of providing for himself and weaker ones who might be dependent upon him, food, clothing and shelter, including the decent comforts of a home according to his station in life. The moment he dons the uniform he is relieved of all such responsibility. The government contracts to provide everything: food, clothing, shelter, medical attention, support for those dependent upon him and funeral expenses if necessary. But these responsibilities are primal and form the incentive for nearly all the world's activity. In fact, it is a safe assertion that in normal peace times the desire for, or necessity of, providing the above requisites, drives nine-tenths of the world's population to its daily occupation. Not only does it drive them to work, but it keeps them there until quitting time, whether the day be eight hours long or eighteen.

Now just as no sane citizen will concern himself over the supply of air to the county or town in which he lives, so no normal soldier will waste his time thinking over the provision of requirements, the supply of which is already fully and adequately guaranteed.

The first important effect of military training then, is that the mind, often in its most formative or receptive state, is habituated, through a period of from one to four years, to neglect, or, rather, to eliminate certain processes of thinking, which in civilian life are primary, basic and vitally necessary.

### **Restricted Use of The Initiative**

Quite as important as a detrimental influence of military training on the man who must again enter the labour market, is what may be termed the re-

stricted use of the initiative. As a private citizen a man would be counted remiss if he did not at all times exercise his undoubted right to use his judgment and power of decision in all matters pertaining exclusively to his personal welfare. In fact, it is only by so doing that he develops his powers of judgment, decision and action. Whatever his station, there is always in his daily life a multitude of circumstances, small and great, which call forth, exercise and by exercising, develop his power of wise decision. It may be only what kind of neck-tie he will wear, or whether he will wear one at all or not; deciding at what hour he will retire and at what hour he will rise; whether he will ride to his work or walk; whether he will spend a sum of money this way, the other way or put it in the bank, and so on ad infinitum, but it is always the free citizen of a democracy exercising his judgment, and taking the consequences whether that judgment has been good, bad or indifferent.

In army life, on the contrary such individual liberty is impossible; for it would quickly convert the best army into an armed mob. About the first thing the recruit learns is that henceforward he is relieved of deciding anything concerning his wearing apparel. From foot-gear to head-piece all is decided for him. Authority also takes over and directs as to time and method such one time personal affairs as the polishing of his shoes, the cutting of his hair and the shaving of his face, and he is freed of deciding upon when he is to go to bed, if at all, and if so, when he is to get up; what he will eat, or when he will eat it.

The recruit next makes the surprising discovery that hitherto he has not known how to walk, to stand, or to turn around correctly. He is accordingly taught how to stand and how to kneel, how to walk and how to stop walking, and, generally speaking, from the bearing of his shoulders and the carrying of his chin, to the swinging of his arms and the placing of his feet, he relearns the art of physical movement from the ground up. This is the merest beginning of his training, however, and as the training is begun, so it is continued; ever broadening the recruit's knowledge of actions and more complex evolutions which must be performed just so and not otherwise.

While the process described is necessary in the thorough training of a citizen soldier, it must be plain to anyone who will give the matter a moment's reflection, that the ever present "just so and no otherwise allowed" restricts for the time being, to the absolute minimum, the private's use of his initiative. That very power of purposeful self direction which may have marked him for success as a private citizen, must, during his army life, be disciplined into almost complete desuetude. Self-power he undoubtedly retains but it is very like that of the locomotive or of the horse bridled and harnessed to the load; to be useful, it must either move along lines previously laid down, or be directed by the guiding hand of higher authority. Now while it may be correctly argued that six months or so of this kind of life will prove beneficial to any young man, can anyone seriously maintain that when prolonged over several years the effect will not be a genuine handicap to the soldier suddenly released and thrust forth into a world of competitive effort?

## Self Interest

The next feature of the old life which is in contrast with the new life of the recruit is that of self interest. In every human action there is the self-referring element i.e.—the prompting to express oneself meanly, well or nobly; and all human action is based on self-interest more or less enlightened. The young civilian is free to choose his occupation according to what he conceives to be his interest, or according to his personal inclination. If he discovers later that it is not to his interest, he is free to abandon it and to choose another. If given an order by his superior the carrying out of which appears to involve danger to himself he is at liberty to decline and no compulsion can be exercised upon him. In fact, from the time he reaches the age of eighteen years there is no command, injunction or request aside from those embodied in the laws of the land which he may not with impunity refuse to carry out on the mere ground that he does not consider it in his interest to do so.

Immediately he joins the army, however, self-interest, except in the highest interpretation, ceases to be a controlling factor in his daily life. If ordered to drill in the mud, he drills; if ordered to march all day in the sweltering heat or numbing cold, he does so. When told to ford a river he may not reply that the current looks swift and dangerous, and finally when ordered to capture a position in the face of what seems certain death—enemy barrage, barbed wire and machine guns—he does so or becomes a casualty. In other words, self-interest is not only made secondary, but disciplined into complete abeyance.

Other phases of military and civilian life may be contrasted here, but sufficient comparison has been made for the purpose in hand. Summarizing, we find that the physically fit private soldier will return with, (1) a three years' training in how to take no thought of what he shall eat, what he shall drink or the wherewithal he shall be clothed—in other words, trained not to accept the civic responsibility of providing for his own sustenance—; (2) three years of training not in self reliance, but in absolute dependence upon the judgment of others to dictate the exact time, place, manner and extent of nearly all his conscious acts; (3) three years in which self interest, the vitalizing source of individual effort, has been successfully disciplined and subordinated into the state of comfortable quiescence.

While it will be admitted that the above constitutes a difficulty in re-adjustment, it will be noted that the difficulty arises not from any newly formed habit of positive thinking, but rather from the disuse or restricted use of certain previous habits of thought.

### **The Positive or Beneficial Side**

It must not be supposed that in his years of service, in which he has continually faced the ultimate things in life, the soldier has not placed much upon the credit side of the ledger. Just as it has been shown that military training leads to the neglect of certain processes of thinking, which tends to handicap the veteran during the first months after his return to private, individual effort, so it can be demonstrated as clearly that this same military train-

ing develops certain qualities of mind which make the repatriated veteran the soundest civic element in the state. Furthermore, these habits of thought, being positive, have left their permanent impress on the character and will influence the veteran's point of view throughout the remainder of his life. To demonstrate this let us further contrast the life of the youth as a private citizen and his life as a soldier on active service.

### **The Collective Point of View**

It has been pointed out that a young man starts life as a civilian from the standpoint of self interest. He notes that this is the common basis for himself and for all those with whom he comes in contact, and from this standpoint he obtains his first view of the state and his duty to it. The state, in his mind, is something which exists to maintain his rights, to afford him protection, opportunity or even privilege and to which his duty is discharged by the payment of taxes and the observance of its laws. In theory, it is true, he subscribes to the law of eminent domain or the supremacy of the collective interest—but in practice and in thought he is a pure individualist.

Now observe the youth when he has been in the army for a few months, and note the complete reversal of his mental attitude. Previously he began with self interest, and on that narrow basis constructed his world including states, governments and international relations.

To-day, however, the old vague theory of the supremacy of collective interest is a living, vital

principal governing his every conscious act, and ever pushing him forward into a life of constant service and sacrifice. In company, battalion, division and army he recognizes a distinct community entirely subordinate to, and serving always a greater community—the nation. He recognizes that just as he, an insignificant unit in the great organization, would be, and of right ought to be, readily sacrificed in order to save his platoon or company; so his battalion or brigade would be sacrificed to save the army—or the army itself to save the greater community at home. Self interest here has no part. As a soldier on active service he lives, moves and has his being in recognition of the fact that the community is all important, and the individual entirely and absolutely secondary.

Now for an individual to put the interest of the community above his own is a true definition of what the world recognizes as public spirit and when practiced constantly, as in the case of the soldier, over a period of several years, the influence on the character and habits of thought tend to become permanent. The discharged soldier, therefore, who passes safely through the period of transition and is successfully re-established becomes the most valuable element in the entire citizen body. He has the increased perspective and clarified vision of the man who has braved suffering, hardship and death for a community of which he was but one insignificant part. He has been trained in community thinking and community responsibility from the day he put on the uniform until the day he received his discharge. On night patrol he crept forward always conscious that a

mistake on his part meant death to his comrades as well as to himself. In a big advance—how often have the papers chronicled this; “An enemy machine gun nest suddenly opened fire on the flank of his platoon—threatening the lives of all. Pte. A., who was nearest the menace, recognizing the danger, charged the emplacement single handed, armed only with rifle and bayonet.” That is to say, Pte. A’s devotion to his community was such that he deliberately placed his life in hazard with the chances one thousand to one against him. This has been the nature of his training and this is the type of man who is coming back to us three hundred thousand strong.

It is because their training to serve us places them under a temporary handicap in their re-entry into civilian life, and because once re-established they are the very sheet anchor of our safety in whatever storm the future may hold, that Canada must bend all her energies in the great task of re-absorbing these gallant fellows.

### **A Method Proved Successful**

When the Department of Soldiers’ Civil Re-Establishment was recently created it took over as one of its branches and continued the work of the old Military Hospitals’ Commission, which was established in 1915. One of its important functions is the retraining for industry of all veterans so disabled that they cannot resume their pre-war occupations. The fact that this work is necessary for only a small proportion even of those who have been disabled means that a close analysis of the working



methods and their results can be made. For this reason it affords a clear illustration of methods which have been tried and proved successful.

Obviously the Re-Establishment Department in this branch of its work has to accomplish two things. It must train the man in a new occupation to such a degree of skill or efficiency that from that standpoint at least he is economically self sufficient. Further than this, it must re-establish the individual man. That is, it must see that he does not fail, until he recovers, in so far as is necessary the civilian point of view with which he left the shop or office three or four years ago in order to serve his country.

Part of the industrial training is done in an institution, but by far the greater share of it is done in the ordinary factory, shop or office, the chief difference between the veteran and his fellow employee being that the former is learning and while learning is on government pay and allowances. It not infrequently happens that while this process of training is proceeding the learner for no apparent reason fails to appear at his appointed task. When sought out by one of the Department's vocational officers—usually a returned soldier—the man being retrained will not be found lacking an apparently valid reason for his non-appearance. It may be “restlessness,” “lack of concentration,” “nervousness,” or simply that he had made up his mind to “chuck it.” The Department's representative takes the attitude of a brother; he neither threatens, coerces, nor cajoles, but reasons the matter out as between friends. He points out that economic independence is the

only basis of contentment, that the time for learning a new trade at government expense may be limited, and that at any rate it would be better to try it out a little longer. The result invariably is that the man returns to his work. Under this sort of treatment some three thousand men have completed courses provided by the Department. Now comes the important question; of the men who have accepted the opportunities offered by the government, what is the percentage of success and what of failure? The statistics of the Department leave no room for doubt—and they show ninety-five percent success with a strong probability of recovering the other five percent.

You may call the method “follow-up” or “personal touch” or whatever else you wish; it is nothing more or less than the spirit of human brotherhood brought into every day relations between a government department and the citizen. If its results are ninety-five percent success with a class of veterans admittedly doubly handicapped, why should not the same spirit of brotherhood, exercised by the citizens of Canada generally and friends of veterans and employers in particular, bring about an equally good result with the men who are discharged physically fit.

