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OUR NATIONAL BENEFACTION

A REVIEW OF THE
CANADIAN PATRIOTIC FUND

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OUR NATIONAL BENEFACTION

A REVIEW OF THE CANADIAN PATRIOTIC FUND.

*(Revised and Reprinted from the Canadian
Magazine)*

THE supreme test which in future years will be applied to nations and individuals, when the events of to-day come under review, will be summed up in the question as to how they rose to the occasion at the time of the Great War. In calling to the colours, arming, equipping, and training upwards of 120,000 men within the ten months that elapsed after the declaration of war, Canada demonstrated her loyalty and ability to support the allied cause. Nor was this all, for in her generous financial response to the many claims presented to her people, on behalf of those requiring assistance in consequence of war-time conditions, she performed her further duty with equal wholeheartedness.

Hardly had hostilities commenced before the British, French, and Belgian reservists in Canada, whatever their station or employment, hastened to join their regiments. Many of these left their homes almost on a moment's notice. A fortnight later the mobilization of the first Canadian contingent began, and a force of 33,000 men was soon assembled at Valcartier. Returns show that fully forty per cent of these men

had wives and dependents relying upon them for support. Without hesitation they answered the call, feeling confident that if they risked their lives for the common defence those who remained behind would see to it that their dependents suffered no lack.

Nor was the confidence of these brave men misplaced. During August and September, at many points throughout Canada, there sprang into activity groups and committees designed to care for the families of those who had gone to the front. At first there was between these organizations no bond of union, nor in their methods any degree of uniformity. Each committee, face to face with its own local problems, endeavoured to deal with the immediate needs of the situation in the manner that seemed effective. It soon became apparent, however, that if no attempt were made to co-ordinate these activities there would be danger of overlapping in some areas and of neglect in others. Hence, towards the end of August, his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught summoned to Ottawa representative men from all parts of the Dominion and after a prolonged conference a national committee was formed.

This organization took the name of the Canadian Patriotic Fund, with headquarters at the capital, and his Royal Highness issued a general appeal inviting communities throughout Canada to co-operate with this central association. The appeal

upon met with a ready response. A strong executive was created, of which his Royal Highness has been the indefatigable chairman, and the Honourable W. T. White, M.P. the treasurer. Under the supervision of this body legislation was passed by the War Parliament incorporating the Canadian Patriotic Fund and empowering this association by means of branches to extend its work throughout the Dominion.

It was early found, when the general appeal went forth, that different communities varied greatly in their ability to contribute. It was felt that it were better to say to each district, "Raise what you can and draw what you need" than to stipulate that every community should locally spend what it secured within its own territory. Had this latter method been adopted it would have been equivalent to penalizing patriotism, for on the shoulders of those whose loyalty had led them to furnish large contingents of enlisted men would have been placed the added burden of supporting a proportionately large number of soldiers' families; while the district which furnished few men would require to make, for the assistance of their families, but trifling sacrifices. Hence the plan adopted by the Canadian Patriotic Fund is to ask that all moneys raised be put into a common purse. Every branch contributes according to its ability and draws from the combined fund according to the proven need. The idea that it is the duty of the strong to bear

the burden of the weak has been the underlying principle of this undertaking since its inception. To-day there are branches of the Fund in every part of the Dominion, from Sydney to Prince Rupert, from Rainy River to Fort Churchill. A few communities, mainly owing to the conditions attached to local subscriptions obtained prior to the organization of the national Fund, have been unable as yet to come in as branches of the larger endeavour, but fully ninety per cent of the work carried on throughout the Dominion for the assistance of the soldiers' dependents is now under the direction of duly constituted branches of the national Canadian Patriotic Fund.

There have been some notable campaigns prosecuted on behalf of this Fund. Five of the larger eastern cities secured subscriptions aggregating \$3,250,000, while many smaller towns raised sums representing as to population all the way from one dollar to seven dollars a head. County and municipal councils have made generous grants, usually payable in monthly instalments during the continuance of the War, and raised by a special tax levied on real estate. Up to the end of May cash contributions amounting to nearly \$4,300,000, had been transmitted to or placed under the control of the treasurer of the central Fund while \$1,700,000, had been paid out, leaving on April 1st a cash reserve in hand amounting to about \$2,600,000. As many of the pledged contributions are payable

in monthly or quarterly instalments, covering the remainder of this year and even extending into 1916, the sum already received will doubtless be increased by another \$1,000,000 before the end of the current year. The efforts of the Executive of the Fund at present are not directed towards securing additional subscriptions in communities that have already once generously responded, but rather towards reaching the few remaining parts of the Dominion that as yet have assumed no portion of the burden.

The central organization is the repository of all moneys collected in the name of the Canadian Patriotic Fund. Before the beginning of each month each local Relief Committee makes a calculation in round figures of the amount which will probably be required to enable it to prosecute its work during the coming month. This amount is drawn from the central treasury by requisition signed by the local chairman or treasurer. At the end of the month, a detailed statement is prepared on a standardized form and sent to the central office. This "disbursement sheet," as it is called, is carefully reviewed by an accountant under the supervision of the Auditor-General of Canada. The names of the soldiers are checked to make certain that they are still on active service. The amounts are rigidly inspected to satisfy the head office that the local committee is neither lavish nor niggardly in its expenditure. The cost of

administration is investigated and kept down to a reasonable level. For the information of any who may imagine that large expenditure is entailed in the handling of the Fund, let it be stated that the combined administration expenses of the head office and branches do not at the present time exceed the amount received as interest from the sums lying in the banks to the credit of the Fund. Hence each subscriber may feel that every dollar he contributes reaches without impairment the dependent of a soldier. Where a family has been left in an outlying district, far away from a centre of population, it becomes the duty of the head office to discover some responsible person who will act in investigating the case and in handling the assistance on its behalf. What would have been "No Man's Land" with a large number of independent associations becomes the special care of an all-inclusive Dominion-wide Fund.

The head office dictates to no local branch. It is generally sufficient to indicate how a difficulty has been elsewhere overcome. During March there was held in Ottawa a conference attended by the working secretaries of the branch funds from Vancouver to Halifax. All the larger organizations, with one or two exceptions were represented. Several days were spent in helpful discussion. It was remarkable to find how similar had been the experience of these men dealing at close range with many difficult problems and how completely they were in agreement

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cept over the general policy when questions came the up for discussion and determination. To- nat day, if a soldier's wife moves from one city ng to another where there is a branch of the m- Canadian Patriotic Fund, she can be ad practically certain that the treatment nt afforded her in both will be identical and st that she will not suffer because of the change. he

er The Act governing the Fund does not es permit of sending of money to the de- nt pendants of soldiers where these families n reside outside the Dominion, yet quite a a few British subjects from other lands have y enlisted in Canadian regiments. Their b- families naturally deserve consideration. g To meet this need there has been created a n system of exchanges with kindred associa- 0 tions. The family of a Canadian left be- l hind in England will be assisted by the . Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association, in . the Canadian separation allowance be in- . sufficient for their support. Soldiers' . families resident in the Eastern United States are cared for by the British Imperial Relief Association of New England, and if . in the the Central or Western States, by the . Canadian Society of New York. A move- . ment is now on foot to form similar com- . mittees at Buffalo, Detroit, Chicago, . Minneapolis and San Francisco. By special . amendment to the Act of Incorporation, the . families of Newfoundlanders enlisted in the . Canadian naval and military forces are . assisted from Canadian sources.

The Act further describes who may be

helped from the Fund. The dependents of men engaged on active service with the military and naval forces of Great Britain or of her allies are all, from the standpoint of the Fund, upon the same footing. British army and naval reservists; members of the Canadian Overseas Force; French, Belgian, Servian, and Russian reservists are regarded as possessing an equal claim for consideration. The Canadian organization works in harmony with the Imperial Pensions Office at Ottawa, the French and Belgian Consuls in Canada, and the Paymaster-General of the Canadian Militia. During the recent session of Parliament, the powers of the Fund were enlarged so as to permit of temporary assistance being extended to widows during the period between the death of the soldier and the commencement of regular payments by the Dominion Pensions Board, and also to families where the convalescent soldier had returned, but was for the time being unable to work.

The local committee of each branch of the Canadian Patriotic Fund exercises, within reasonable limits, full authority in determining how much assistance a family may receive. Its first duty is to study local conditions and formulate a subsistence scale which represents the amount judged sufficient to enable an average household to be maintained at the level of decent living. It is taken for granted that every family, whatever its previous experiences, is, during the absence of the soldier on service,

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entitled to reach this grade of comfort. In most of our eastern cities the typical family—a woman with three children, aged respectively twelve, eight, and four—is considered as requiring for herself one dollar a day, and for the children, according to age, twenty-five cents, fifteen cents, and ten cents, a total of \$1.50 a day, or \$45.00 a month. Keeping this scale in view the local Relief Committee proceeds to determine what amount each separate family requires to bring it up to this level.

The first question always asked is whether the soldier's family is *in need*; that is to say, whether, if there were no Patriotic Fund, the family would fall below the scale set by the committee. If the income of the family, notwithstanding the absence of the soldier, still equals or exceeds the determined scale, then that family would not be regarded as in need, and, consequently, would have no valid claim on the Fund. Were inquiry to bring out the fact, however, that in the absence of the soldier, the revenues of the family fell below forty-five dollars a month, the Patriotic Fund would then be expected to make up the deficiency.

The separation allowance granted by the Canadian Government amounts to twenty dollars a month. This is sent directly from Ottawa to the wife of each enlisted soldier and to the widowed mother where her absent unmarried son has been her sole support. When reckoning what a family should receive from the Fund this separation allow-

ance is deducted from the living scale, together with any other revenues that the family in the soldier's absence continues to receive. What the soldier may send home, saved from his daily pay, is not by the Fund taken into consideration. Nor is it deemed advisable for a woman with children to go out to work, leaving the little ones to be cared for by others. It were better that she should remain at home, even though the payment from the Fund might otherwise be reduced to the extent of her earnings.

Sometimes it is stated that a soldier's family is being better provided for during his absence than when the husband was at home. Such instances doubtless occur, but they are not numerous. Even where the allegation is true, it does not necessarily create just ground for criticism. "Bill Smith's wife" and her children may have had a trying time for several winters, and her husband may not have been regarded as one of the foremost citizens of the town in which they live; but when he enlists and becomes a member of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and does his duty faithfully by King and country, Mrs. William Smith's position in life advances accordingly, and she is entitled to live in reasonable comfort.

The average amount granted a soldier's family varies according to the class to which he belongs and to the locality where his family resides. It is taken for granted that all soldiers' families within a given district

are entitled to adopt a like scale of living. The amount, therefore, that they may receive from the Fund will be larger or smaller according to the deductions made on account of revenues from other sources. A Belgian household as a rule draws more from the Fund than that of any other class. Their monthly stipend runs from thirty to forty dollars, for there are practically no deductions from the scale, since the Belgian Government can pay no separation allowance. The families of French reservists rank next in amount. Their Government allows them about two-fifths of what is required according to our scale. The British reservist receives from the Imperial Pension Office from fifteen to twenty dollars a month according to the size of his family, and these families usually come upon the Fund as well to the extent of twenty or twenty-five dollars a month. The families of Canadian volunteers, who, of course, constitute by far the greater part of the beneficiaries of the Fund, ordinarily receive in Eastern Canada from sixteen to eighteen dollars a month. This comparatively small amount is due to the fact that the families are not large, as most of the men who have enlisted in Canadian regiments are comparatively young. In the western provinces the rates allowed are about twenty per cent higher than in the west, since the cost of living, especially in winter, is greater on the prairies and in the mountains than in the older settled parts

of Canada. During April \$273,423.90 was drawn out by 14,615 families, or an average of \$18.71 to each family.

The Patriotic Fund is not a charity and ought not to be regarded as such. Every loyal Canadian to-day should ask himself, "Shall I fight or pay?" If he cannot do the former, he should try to do the latter to the extent of his ability. Let it be remembered that the soldier's wife must give her consent before her husband may go to the front. She knowingly agrees to take the risk of becoming a widow or having an invalid husband to look after for the rest of her life. True, the Canadian Government will, if she becomes a widow, grant her a pension or, if her husband becomes disabled, he will receive an allowance according to the extent of his disability; but the maximum in either case will furnish but a bare subsistence. The men may be the heroes, but the women are likely to be the martyrs of this War, and their sacrifice should be valued accordingly. In a few cases where local committees have undertaken to spend "their own funds in their own way" there has been a tendency to treat the soldier's wife in the same way as the down-and-outs of the town, giving them clothes, groceries, or coal in small amounts and making them feel that they are objects of charity. Against this attitude on the part of these organizations, happily few in number, the Canadian Patriotic Fund has always strongly protested. The national organization insists that local relief

of the unemployed be kept wholly separate from supplementary assistance rendered the soldiers' wives; those of the former class may be the recipients of charity, the latter are but permitting the man who stays at home to take the place financially of the one who fights.

In some of our cities, notably Montreal and St. John, the work of a Women's Auxiliary has been one of the finest features of the service. In the former city six hundred ladies, under the skilful generalship of Miss Helen R. Y. Reid, have undertaken to visit periodically the 3,500 families receiving aid from the Patriotic Fund. Each ward has its ward-head, with as many assistant visitors as may be required, allowing usually five families to every visitor. Cheques are sent out by the local treasurer every month, and shortly after the lady visitor calls to ascertain whether "the dividend" has arrived and whether all is well in the soldier's home. Bonds of sympathy and friendship have been formed between visitor and visited to the lasting benefit of both. Indeed, it is difficult to determine which has been helped to the greater extent by this mutual contact.

At this time we have no means of knowing how long the War may continue, It may require many months of frightful slaughter before final victory is achieved. Canada will probably be called upon to send "men, more men, and yet more men" to the front. At the outset of the War the proportion of

married men among those who enlisted was but as one to four. With heavier calls on the Canadian-born, this percentage is certain to increase in later contingents. The monthly drain upon the Fund has already nearly reached \$300,000. True, there has been formed a considerable reserve, but such a precaution is but common prudence. The work of organization on the part of the Canadian Patriotic Fund must continue until there remains not a city, town, or village in Canada that has failed to contribute to the extent of its ability on behalf of the soldier's dependents, while he risks all in defence of our common heritage.

HERBERT BROWN AMES.

Ottawa, June 1st, 1915.

