

## CANADA'S WAR RELIEF WORK

BY SIR HEBERT AMES,<sup>1</sup>

Ottawa, Canada.

To Canada's instant and unreserved adoption of the dependents of her soldiers as objects of sacred trust is due the Canadian Patriotic Fund, a form of war relief work peculiar to Canada, arising from her own particular problems and reflecting, in tangible form, her characteristics as a nation. To the sincerity of her promise made to the first of her soldiers to go overseas in the autumn of 1914 is due the thorough business methods which have characterized the management of the fund from its inception to the present time. To the broad vision of her Governor General, H. R. H., the Duke of Connaught, and the leading men and women of the nation is due the happy circumstance that from the start the fund was Dominion-wide in its workings whether of creation or administration. As a result of this wise forethought there was secured coördination and uniformity of both effort and sacrifice throughout the Dominion with a complete elimination of overlapping and its inevitable waste of time, energy and money, coupled with minimum results which would have been the inevitable result had local centres been made independent dispensers of relief.

## INFLEXIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT PROVISION

Examination into the provision made for the dependents of its soldiers by the Canadian government drove home the fact that the entire scheme was worked out on a military basis which made home of secondary consideration. There was a separation allowance of \$20 a month for the wife of each married man, but the soldier's pay was according to rank instead of in proportion to his need. The size of his family and local conditions affecting the cost of living were not considered by the government although in real life both are determining factors in budget making.

This lack of elasticity did not appeal to the conference called at Ottawa to organize the patriotic fund. Individual sympathy with

<sup>1</sup> This article was prepared in the office of the Director of Public Information from facts supplied by the Honorary Secretary of the Canadian Patriotic Fund.

individual needs was conspicuously absent and conspicuously necessary if there was to be that close, old-fashioned neighborliness implied in the acceptance of these words of the nation. It is that touch which has endeared the fund to every Canadian, rich or poor, and that touch alone accounts for the magnificent response made to every appeal for contributions to the fund. It is that touch which causes every Canadian to regard the fund as his personal promissory note. He feels that he is standing back of his soldiers in a very near and individual sense.

#### NATURE OF RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE

Proof of the wonderful response of the people is given in the two sets of statistics—enlistments for overseas service and applications for relief through the fund. In the autumn of 1914, Canada's overseas forces numbered 36,000. Within a year there were 165,000 of all ranks; by the next autumn the number had grown to 361,500 and only once, in 1915, did the monthly output of the fund exceed the income. In that year the monthly output increased from \$175,000 to \$325,000, showing how Canadians regarded the fund. These were anxious days for the executive and it was at this time that the great wisdom of the Dominion-wide idea became apparent. As a rule recruiting was greatest in provinces least favorably situated financially. Common service, common sacrifice, the principle of giving money or men saved the day. The basis for giving was that of ability; the basis for helping was that of need.

By 1916 the needs of the fund were placed at \$8,000,000. "Give till it hurts," became the slogan. Systematic allotment of each province's share of the total contribution was made. Ontario was asked for \$4,500,000; Quebec, \$1,500,000; the Maritime Provinces, \$700,000; Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, \$500,000 each. Every province was subdivided, each city and town asked to assume its share. Publicity was given the campaign through newspapers, posters, leaflets, buttons, Speakers' Patriotic League and skilled organizers of campaigns. The close of the year showed an increase of 20 per cent in demands on the fund and an increase of 50 per cent over the contributed amount asked in the campaign. On New Year's Day, His Royal Highness had asked for \$8,000,000; Canada's answer was \$11,573,345. Since June, 1916, the fund has expended an average of \$900,000 a month which

has given timely help to 165,000 individuals. This means that the promise has been kept to 60,000 men fighting "over there."

#### BULK OF FUND MEANS SACRIFICE

Since the campaign of 1916, responses have been more and more generous. Provinces and the larger cities have reached wonderful heights of generosity, but while individuals have given cheques for princely amounts the bulk of the fund has been contributed by the small wage-earners. This is, of course, most gratifying and shows how thoroughly the fund represents Canada's war spirit. British Columbia furnishes a striking case in point. Leading all other provinces in recruiting according to population, it is, nevertheless, essentially a province of wage-earners. Yet its contributions to the fund have been nothing short of marvelous.

In the mining towns it is the established practice among miners and smelters to contribute "a shift a month" to the fund. Trail, with a population of 4,000, contributes \$50,000 per year, or \$12.50 per capita. Rossland with a similar population gives \$36,000 per year; Headly with a population of 400 gives \$9,000 per year, or \$22.50 per head. Greenwood with its 600 gives \$15,000, or \$25 per head; Phoenix with 1200 gives \$18,000, while Silverton with 800 gives \$16,000 per year. In some districts the workmen have instructed the superintendents to deduct  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent or one day's pay per month from their wages.

Rural communities, in order to make certain that they are included in this beautiful work, have overcome the difficulties attendant upon collections in sparsely settled districts by requesting councils to levy assessments whereby rural contributions might be equalized. This contribution of the council represents the various individual contributions of the constituents and is purely voluntary. The rural communities of Canada contributed in this way during 1917 the sum of \$3,000,000 to the fund.

It is next to impossible to find a community that cannot furnish more than one example of wonderful generosity on the part of someone who can scarcely afford the sacrifice. A certain mutual fire insurance company in Ontario at a general meeting of shareholders voted to the patriotic fund its entire yearly dividend of \$50,000. An old lighthouse keeper near Vancouver raised flowers and sold them to the tourists, realizing therefrom more than \$1,000 which he donated

to the fund. Gaspé fishermen, lumberjacks from the Quebec bush, cheese-makers, road-makers, all find their greatest pleasure in denying themselves in order to contribute to the fund. Nearly \$12,500 has been sent in by Indians on the reserves and even from Herschell's Island within the Arctic Circle comes a gift of \$20 from the Eskimo Chikchagalook. These warm-hearted people make the "million a month" possible. The town of Waterloo numbers 95,000 inhabitants of whom one-half are of German birth or German descent. Up to 1917 its contribution to the fund was more than \$350,000 and its promise for 1917 was \$250,000 provided the war lasted till the end of the year.

The individual records just cited and thousands more just like them are powerful arguments for keeping the fund as it is—the free-will offering of a generous people standing back of its soldiers. It is peculiarly the people's own movement near and dear to their hearts and should not be taken over by the federal government as was once proposed.

#### HOW THE FUND OPERATES

A short outline showing the working of the fund will make still clearer the reason why it is so loyally supported. All contributions are deposited to the credit of the Honorary Treasurer of the National Fund in Ottawa. As soon as deposited the funds pass under the control of the National Executive. Each local branch sends to Ottawa an estimate of the amount needed for the month. The sum is promptly sent to the local branch treasurer and deposited by him as his working account. All cheques issued for relief by him during the month are drawn against this account. At the end of each month the branch treasurer makes out a disbursement sheet, on a standardized form, bearing the names of those who have received help, together with full information.

The amount paid each family is compared with that family's scheduled allowance. Careful comparisons are constantly made between groups having similar conditions. Niggardliness or overgenerosity on the part of local boards are thus prevented. A splendid feature of the Ottawa office is the card index containing over 100,000 records covering every man who has enlisted for service and reported to military headquarters as having dependent relatives. Each man's record is strictly up to date. Military

camps, hospitals and discharge depots send daily reports to the fund headquarters, and enlistments, discharges, transfers, promotions, casualties, pensions and everything else concerning the military standing of the soldier is a matter of knowledge every day and entered on the card. This record is invaluable in checking up the disbursement sheets received from local branches.

On enlistment, the wife of every soldier receives from the government a separation allowance of \$20 a month, recently increased to \$25 a month. She also receives part of his assigned pay which differs according to rank. The two average \$35 a month. The beneficent work of the fund becomes apparent at this point and supplements the government allowance with a sum sufficient to overcome the difficulties of living imposed by local conditions and size of families.

In order to become eligible to the fund the applicant must furnish:

- (a) Positive proof that the soldier has enlisted for active service.
- (b) A wife must produce her marriage certificate and the ages of all children must be verified.
- (c) A mother or other dependent must furnish proof of actual dependence upon the soldier.

There must be a thorough investigation as to sources of income other than that furnished by the government and also into the mode of living and general moral standing of the applicant.

#### SCHEDULE OF ALLOWANCES

Having been accepted as a beneficiary the applicant begins to receive help from the date of application or in extreme cases, for one month antedating application where that has been delayed or neglected by the applicant. The monthly allowance is as follows:—

*Wife with Children.*—(a) For herself, \$10. (b) For one child: girl 10 to 17 years, \$7.50; boy 10 to 16 years, \$7.50; child 5 to 10 years, \$4.50; each child under 5 years, \$3; second child over 10, \$4.50; third child over 10, \$3; second and more 5 to 10, \$3.

*Wife without Children.*— If young and not under the necessity of maintaining a home, \$5.

*Widowed Mother.*—(a) Dependent on son, \$10. (b) If the government separation allowance and assigned pay are less than \$35 the rates quoted are increased; if they exceed that amount the fund allowance is decreased. Under no circumstances can the maximum rates named by the fund be increased.

*Partial Dependence.*—Each case of partial dependence receives individual

treatment dependent entirely on the merits of the case. The first point considered in the net value of the son to his mother previous to enlistment. When determining this the fact is kept in mind that the son's wages in 1918 would in all probability have been greater than he was receiving in the year of his enlistment. Relative wage standards at day of enlistment and at date of application to the fund must be considered. Another consideration which is always present in the calculations is the amount of the assigned pay.

Cost of living varies greatly in different provinces and the average allotment varies accordingly. In Prince Edward Island it is \$10 per month; Nova Scotia, \$12.50; New Brunswick, \$14; Quebec and Ontario, \$15 to \$16; Saskatchewan, \$21; Alberta, \$20; British Columbia, \$20. The monthly average for Canada is \$16.25. This means that the typical Canadian soldier's family consisting of wife and two children receives from all sources about \$51.25 per month. The administration of the fund is in the hands of persons who serve without remuneration and there is incurred an exceedingly small running expense. Interest on the reserve bank deposit covers all expense of administration. The management has been able to assure the contributors to the fund that of every dollar given, the soldier's family has received one hundred cents.

#### INTERNATIONAL IN SCOPE

While the fund exists primarily for Canada's own men no soldier's family is discriminated against. Families of reservists who lived in Canada and are fighting with the Allies on any front are allowed to benefit by the fund. Indeed, the outlay for French and Belgian families is the greatest of all because the government grant in the former case is small and in the latter entirely lacking. Now that American soldiers are overseas their families would be cared for, if necessary, exactly the same as would the Canadian soldier's family.

One of the prime objects in creating the fund was to supply the sympathetic element which is needed especially in war times. The object has been gained in a wonderfully successful way through the fact that much, indeed almost all, of the executive work of the local branches has been in the hands of warm-hearted, patriotic, women who have spared themselves in no particular but have given time, energy, affection and executive ability of the highest order to the cause they love best.