

CHAPTER XI

CONSCRIPTION

The Imperial War Cabinet

“UPON MY RETURN from England on May 15th, 1917, I speedily embarked upon an exceedingly stormy political sea, which was swept, from time to time, by gales of varying intensity and from many quarters.” With these words Sir Robert Borden introduces in his Memoirs a chapter entitled “Conscription”. To this subject we must now turn our attention.

The Canadian Prime Minister had gone to England at the invitation of the British Government to attend “a series of special and continuous meetings of the War Cabinet in order to consider urgent questions affecting the prosecution of the war, the possible conditions on which, in agreement with our Allies, we could assent to its termination, and the problems which will then immediately arise”.¹ For the purpose of these meetings, Borden and the other Dominion Prime Ministers would be members of the War Cabinet, which at the time consisted of the Prime Minister (Mr. David Lloyd George) and four of his colleagues.* The enlarged sessions came to be known as the Imperial War Cabinet. An Imperial War Conference was to meet at the same time. Although Sir Robert had been in office for more than five years, he had not yet attended an Imperial Conference, the one scheduled for 1915 having been postponed. Having formerly protested that “statesmen of the British Isles” were arrogating to themselves the framing of war policy, without consulting the Dominions or even releasing relevant information to them, he welcomed the opportunity to go to London; and to allow him to do this the Canadian House of Commons adjourned its 1917 session from 7 February to 19 April.²

The meetings in the United Kingdom were delayed by the Australian Prime Minister’s difficulties with the wartime election at home; it was not until 20 March that the new Imperial War Cabinet held its opening session. Next day the larger Imperial War Conference held its first meeting, and from then until 2 May deliberations of the two bodies continued, with meetings taking place

* In addition to Mr. Lloyd George the following were members of the War Cabinet: Mr. Bonar Law (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Earl Curzon (Lord President of the Council), Viscount Milner and Mr. Arthur Henderson.

usually on alternate days. Discussions at the Conference had very little to do with the conduct of the war, which was left almost entirely to the War Cabinet.³ The Australian election campaign went on until 5 May 1917, and precluded the attendance of any representative from that Dominion; but South Africa, New Zealand, Newfoundland and India were all represented. Lloyd George, wrote Borden in his Memoirs, "had virtually answered the appeal or challenge of Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1897: 'If you want our aid, call us to your councils'." He further noted that in the Imperial War Cabinet "Great Britain presided, but the Dominions met her on equal terms." He expressed his satisfaction that almost every question connected with the prosecution of the war had been under consideration by the Dominions. "We have been placed in possession of the confidential and secret reports of the Imperial General Staff and of the Commanders-in-Chief in the various theatres of operations as well as the naval advisers of the Admiralty."⁴ At the same time the meetings had given the representatives of the British Government a much better appreciation of the Dominions' war effort than they could have learned from any number of telegrams and despatches. As summed up by the Secretary of the Imperial War Cabinet, "The great drain on the time and energy of the British Ministers, and the inconvenience of the overseas representatives in their prolonged absence from home and the dangers which they man in passing through seas infested with submarines were felt to have been well worth while."⁵

The delay in holding the conferences permitted Borden to visit all the large Canadian camps in England. He also had ample opportunity to discuss with Sir George Perley matters concerning the Canadian Expeditionary Force. On 8 March, accompanied by Perley, the Prime Minister crossed to France, where before returning to England four days later, he met Currie, Haig, and Nivelles at their respective headquarters.

In France, Borden was impressed by the admirable spirit displayed by the troops. He reported that Haig and his staff "had afforded him every facility". The record reveals no promise to introduce conscription; and at this period it seems the Prime Minister had not abandoned hope of sufficient voluntary enlistment. On his return to London on 12 March Borden cabled Kemp: "I voice the feeling at the front when I appeal to the Canadian people to support with the most earnest effort the proposals which you are putting forward to stimulate and assist recruiting. A splendid response to those proposals is vitally necessary in order that the full strength of our Dominion in co-operation with the whole Empire shall be thrown into the struggle with the least possible delay."⁶

Borden had kept close touch with Canada, especially on the state of recruiting. As noted earlier (above, p. 218), Sir Sam Hughes, before his resignation, had committed Canada to a fifth division and had spoken of raising a sixth, and Borden himself had promised half a million men. After October 1916 there was no longer any intention of raising a sixth division (above, p. 231). In January 1917 the War Office had asked for the definite commitment of the 5th Division, but the difficulties of reinforcing five divisions had led to that formation's remaining in England for home defence. Telegrams from the

Minister of Militia, ending with that of 30 April (above, p. 222), apprised Sir Robert of the meagre results from National Service lists and of the failure of the Home Defence Force Scheme. He was compelled to conclude that “any further effort for voluntary enlistment would provide. . . wholly inadequate results.”⁷

On 3 May, King George V received members of the Conference at Windsor, and spoke of the meetings as “a giant stride on the road of progress and Imperial development”. Two days later, the Canadian party sailed for home. Walter Long (the Colonial Secretary) accompanied Borden to Paddington Station to say goodbye, and gave his view that there should be no general election in either Great Britain or Canada during the war. He was told by Borden that there could be no further extension of the Canadian Parliament “except by practically unanimous consent”. For this reason the Canadian Prime Minister might be “forced into an election”.⁸

Borden’s Decision

On 16 May Sir Robert returned to the Canadian House of Commons, bringing with him a gold mace from the Lord Mayor of London to replace that lost in the fire of 3 February 1916, when both chambers and the clock-tower of the parliament buildings had been destroyed. On the 18th he made a statement in the House regarding his recent visit to Europe, ending his speech with a review of the military situation, which had impressed him with its “extreme gravity”. “The voluntary system”, he asserted, “will not yield further substantial results”, and for that reason “early proposals will be made. . . to provide, by compulsory military enlistment on a selective basis, such reinforcements as may be necessary to maintain the Canadian Army to-day in the field as one of the finest fighting units of the Empire. The number of men required will be not less than 50,000 and will probably be 100,000.”⁹

It is convenient at this juncture to examine the reasons for Borden’s apparent change in policy. He emphatically repudiated any suggestion that he was introducing conscription at the instigation of the British Government. “Some people afflicted with a diseased imagination have asserted that I took my present course at the request or dictation of the British Government. . . The subject was never discussed between myself and any member of the British Government”.¹⁰ The record indicates nothing to the contrary. A letter to the Archbishop of Montreal in reply to a protest against the introduction of conscription is illuminating. Borden referred to his previous conviction that there need be no compulsion - though he reminded Archbishop Bruchési of his published statement to labour delegates in the previous December that he could give no assurance that conscription would not be resorted to if warranted. He had persisted in this belief up to his visit to England, but there, however, his eyes had been opened more fully. “What I saw and learned made me realize how much more critical is the position of the Allies and how much more uncertain is the ultimate result of the great struggle . . .” In France, he had had “the privilege of looking into the eyes of tens of thousands of men at the front who look to us for

the effort which will make their sacrifice serve the great purpose for which it was undertaken”¹¹

There seems little doubt that Sir Robert confidently expected a creditable war effort by Canada to constitute a charter of full nationhood. Through Borden, Canada’s autonomy within the Commonwealth* had been advanced - the last great step forward would be won for her on the field of battle. His visit to England undoubtedly enhanced his awareness of Allied needs in manpower, and before returning to Canada he was convinced that Canadian reinforcements for the front would not be forthcoming under the voluntary system. It was Canada’s duty to provide men, for to have done otherwise would have been inconsistent with the determination to play a full part in the war and the peace that would follow. Thus, however reluctantly, Borden returned to Canada as the advocate of military conscription.

There were other factors. Based on population, Canada had sent proportionately fewer men into battle than had Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. Both Great Britain and New Zealand had already resorted to conscription, though Australia had rejected it by a referendum held in 1916. And at home Borden, who in the previous December had toured Canada to stimulate recruiting, was well aware of the bitterness of feeling on the part of English-speaking Canada provoked by what was generally regarded as the poor showing of French Canadians in enlistment figures.[†] In his Memoirs Borden was later to make allowance for the attitude of the Canadian of French descent, who, “thoroughly devoted to his people and his province and deeply attached to his family, his friends and neighbours”, had a limited vision which sometimes “did not extend far beyond the boundaries of his parish”. Contrary to expectations the Quebec peasant had little sympathy for the plight of the people of France, whose sufferings, he was being told, “were just retribution for the unholy spoliation and humiliation of the Church in France”.¹⁴

Before presenting a measure to introduce compulsory military service, the Prime Minister was concerned with forming a coalition government that would accept conscription as a national necessity. Extension of the present parliamentary term by a party majority vote - which the British Government declared it would act on by placing the necessary amendment to the British North America Act before Parliament-Borden deemed inadvisable, as likely to undermine or destroy “the moral authority of the Government”. On 6 June 1917

* The name “Commonwealth”, replacing “Empire”, had been given official use for the first time at the Imperial War Conference, when Sir Robert introduced a resolution calling for “full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth”.¹²

† It is impossible to authenticate the various “statistics” concerning French-Canadian enlistments that were bandied about in the press and on the public platform during this period and since. In official military records all Canadian-born were treated alike as “Canadian”. When attesting a man on enlistment into the Canadian Expeditionary Force no attempt was made to establish his nationality beyond recording the country of his birth. The only question on the Attestation Form beaming directly on this point read: “In what town, township or parish and in what country were you born?” Thus when Sir Robert Borden gave the House of Commons figures “furnished to me by the Department of Militia and Defence”, showing that up to 31 March 1918 there had been despatched overseas, 147,505 Canadians born “of British descent”, and 16,268 Canadian-born “of French descent”, the accuracy of his information must be questioned.¹³

the leader of the opposition, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, advised Borden that he could not accept conscription and would therefore not enter a coalition government adopting such a policy.¹⁵

Legislation for Compulsory Service

On 11 June Borden introduced his Military Service Bill. He explained that a section in the Militia Act of 1868 (retained in the Act of 1904) provided for compulsory military service outside, as well as within the Dominion, in a case of national emergency. All males who were British subjects between the ages of 18 and 60 were declared to be liable to service in the Militia, which the Governor in Council might place on active service "anywhere in Canada, and also beyond Canada, for the defence thereof." Though the law, as it stood, thus already gave the necessary compulsory powers, it provided only for levy by ballot - an indiscriminate method of selection which would deplete industries and agriculture of skilled workers. Borden demanded that the army should be reinforced by a process of selection "based upon an intelligent consideration of the country's needs and conditions". He emphasized the need for reinforcements. He pointed out that April and May had brought enlistments of 11,790 men, but that in those same two months Canadian casualties had numbered 23,939. During the next seven months at least 70,000 reinforcements would be needed to maintain four divisions in the field. The numbers to be raised under the bill would be limited to 100,000 men, between the ages of 20 and 45.¹⁶

When the bill came up for second reading, Laurier moved an amendment calling for a referendum to be taken on the issue. This was rejected by a vote in which the Government was supported by many Liberals and opposed by French-Canadian Conservatives. After a third reading, and passage through the Senate, the bill became law on 29 August.¹⁷ As already noted (above, p. 284), while the matter was being discussed in the House, Borden used the appointment of Currie as Corps Commander to gain further public support for the bill's passage.¹⁸ Needless to say, the contents of Currie's message urging that the necessary steps be taken to maintain the Corps at full strength were given full publicity in Canada.¹⁹

The provisions of the Military Service Act applied to all male British subjects in Canada between 20 and 45 years for the duration of the war and the period of demobilization. Men to be called up were at first placed in ten classes, later rearranged into six. The first to be summoned were young men, either unmarried or childless widowers, between the ages of 20 and 34. The final class included married men in the 40-44 age group and widowers in that age category with one or more children. These classes were to be called up from time to time by proclamation of the Governor in Council. Tribunals would be appointed to deal with individual claims to exemption and to hear appeals. The conditions of exemption were broad and liberal, and covered workers in essential war occupations, or certain specially qualified workers, those whose enrolment would result in serious hardship due to "financial or business obligations or domestic

position, ill health or infirmity”, and conscientious objectors. Among special classes exempted from war service were all clergy, and members of Mennonite or Doukhobor communities, who had been excused from bearing arms by Orders in Council passed in 1873 and 1898.²⁰

On 17 July Borden moved a resolution to extend the term of the existing parliament for a year as foreshadowed at the opening of the session. He had no hope of unanimous assent, and the party majority which he achieved was useless for his purpose. A general election was inevitable.

The General Election of 1917

The government now introduced a bill of an extraordinary nature—the War-Times Election Bill - which, coupled with the Military Voters’ Bill, prepared the ground for the impending election. Under the latter measure, which was passed on 31 August, military electors would now include all British subjects without age restriction, male or female, whether ordinarily resident in Canada or not, who were on active service in the Canadian forces, as well as recent residents of Canada who were serving in any forces of Britain or her Allies.²¹ The War-Times Election Act, passed on 14 September after closure had been applied, gave the vote for the duration of the war and the period of demobilization to close women relatives* of persons, male or female, living or dead, who were serving or who had served outside of Canada in the Canadian or British forces. It disfranchised conscientious objectors and all citizens naturalized in Canada after 1902 if of alien enemy birth or extraction.²²

Both these measures came under strong attack from the opposition. Sir Wilfrid Laurier emphatically declared that to enfranchise only women relatives of soldiers was unjust discrimination, and that the disfranchisement of former aliens who had been naturalized was a retrograde and German measure.²³ He accused the government of having created “a special electorate in view of an impending election”.²⁴ In defence Borden argued that citizens whose origin, ties of kinship, and natural sympathies prevented them from being sent to fight “ought not to be called upon to pronounce judgement upon the issues. . . in this election”²⁵

During August Borden had already decided to appeal to the country as the head of a Union Government. In proposing a coalition government having equal representation from both parties he was opening the dooms to that section of the Liberal Party which supported compulsory military service. These were prominent Liberals who declared that they favoured National Government and the formation of a War Council, but thought a change of leadership essential. At a Conservative caucus on 29 August the Prime Minister expressed his willingness to retire altogether or to serve under Sir George Foster or any other leader who could form a Union Government; but, led by Foster, the gathering pledged its firm adherence to Borden. With the Conservatives thus showing their

* Wives, widows, mothers, sisters and daughters.

solidarity the Liberals acquiesced. Parliament was dissolved on 6 October and five days later Union Government came into being with a strong cabinet drawn from the ranks of both parties. As the date for the general election approached, the Union Government issued a strongly worded appeal to the members of the C.E.F., declaring that the Military Service Act would be enforced “with vigour and promptitude”.

Borden’s personal election campaign in the Maritimes was interrupted on 6 December, when a French munitions ship collided with a Norwegian vessel and blew up in Halifax harbour. Large areas of both Halifax and Dartmouth were razed, and 1630 lives were lost. Appalled at the magnitude of the calamity to a city with which he had been associated for more than half his lifetime, Borden cancelled his public meetings and hurried to the distressed community. Canadians went to the polls on 17 December, and on the following day the result of the civil vote was announced. It was even then apparent that the Government had been sustained by an overwhelming majority.

In the voting overseas, the polls opened on 1 December and closed on the 17th. As we have seen (above, p. 338), in its efforts to secure every favourable vote, the Government had gone so far as to make an indirect approach to the Commander-in-Chief while a major battle was in progress. As might be expected the assistance of the Canadian Corps Commander was also sought. General Currie was not enthusiastic about the Corps “being bothered by an election”,²⁶ and he was reluctant to send another message to the Canadian people urging conscription (above, p. 284).²⁷ He claimed that he had always striven to keep clear of politics, but, as he wrote to Perley on 10 December, “both sides seem determined to mix me up in it.* I do not consider it fair that in the propaganda issued by the Government my name should appear so prominently.”²⁹

Returns from overseas were not complete and officially issued until March 1918. Well over 90 per cent of the soldiers on active service cast their votes for the Union Government and conscription, bringing to 71 Borden’s majority in the House. The Liberals won 82 seats - 62 in Quebec, which also elected three Unionists.³⁰

By the time the new parliament met on 18 March 1918, machinery for the enforcement of the Military Service Act had been set up under the control of the Department of Justice. A Military Service Sub-Committee, representing the Militia Department, was headed by the Chief of the General Staff, Major-General W. G. Gwatkin. On 3 September a Military Service Council, acting directly under the Minister of Justice, was created “to advise and assist in the administration and enforcement” of the Act. On 15 June 1918 its duties were taken over by the Military Service Branch (of the Department of Justice) under its Director, Lt. Col. H. A. C. Machin. The Council appointed fifteen registrars throughout Canada. To give everyone the opportunity of properly claiming exemption from compulsory service, local tribunals, to the number of 1387, were

* Currie was much disturbed over opposition statements that he had been removed from the command of the Corps “owing to inefficiency and the excessive number of casualties at Passchendaele”.²⁸

established, each composed of two members, one appointed by a parliamentary Board of Selection and the other by a County or District Judge. Appeals from their decisions could be carried to one of 195 appeal tribunals, each a judge, appointed in general by the Chief Justice of the province. Rulings of an appeal tribunal might be referred to the Central Appeal Judge, whose decision was final.³¹

The Department of Militia made an initial request for 25,000 men – a number with which it “could most conveniently deal” - and thereafter 10,000 each month. On 13 October 1917 a Royal Proclamation called on all men in Class 1 to register. By 10 November 1917, the final date fixed for registration and claims for exemption, 21,568 had reported for service and 310,376 had applied for exemption.³² In Quebec, where Borden reported that “wholesale exemptions seemed to have been granted”, unrest over conscription had steadily grown throughout the summer. On 2 June Archbishop Bruchési had again written to the Prime Minister, predicting disorders in Quebec if conscription should be persisted in; in August he warned, “We are nearing racial and religious war.”³³ To his plea that the Military Service Act should not be enforced the Prime Minister remained adamant. “It is difficult”, wrote Borden, “to understand why passion should be aroused in the Province of Quebec by a measure which does not in the least discriminate against that Province but applies equally to every Province of Canada . . . I could not remain at the head of the Government and delay its enforcement.” In four days recently 5500 Canadians had fallen in the vicinity of Lens. “I should feel that their blood and that of all others who have fought would be upon my head if the provisions of this law should remain unexecuted.”³⁴

The Operation of the Military Service Act

No serious disorder broke out until March 1918, when the effects of enforcement began to be felt in Quebec. The entry of the United States into the war in April 1917 had closed the door to a safe haven for escapees across the border; under agreements signed by Canada, Great Britain and the United States, absentee males of military age became subject to the conscription laws of the country in which they were residing.

Then came trouble. On 28 March Federal officers enforcing the Military Service Act in Quebec City were assaulted by a crowd, who released a young man who had been arrested for not having upon his person his certificate of exemption. Rioting continued on the following day, which was Good Friday, and the Military Service Registry office was destroyed by fire, together with all its records. About midday on 30 March the G.O.C. Military District No. 5 reported to the C.G.S. that matters were getting worse and he required 1000 men, in addition to the 890 available in Quebec, to cope with the situation. Shortly after the receipt of this message, the Cabinet directed the C.G.S. to move the required number of troops from Ontario to Quebec. Accordingly a mixed force of 700

men (from the 1st Central Ontario Regiment) was despatched to Quebec and arrangements were made to bring in a further 3000 troops from the west. The troops from Toronto began arriving by train on the afternoon of the 31st. On the previous day Major-General F. L. Lessard (Inspector General for Eastern Canada) had been instructed to proceed from Halifax to Quebec. The C.G.S. reported to the Minister of Militia (who was visiting in the United States) that Brig.-Gen- J. P. Landry, the G.O.C., was "doing all right but Lessard on account of local knowledge was ordered to Quebec." Lessard arrived in Quebec on 31 March and assumed command.³⁵

There were further disorders on the Saturday night and on Easter Day, though these were less serious than had been expected. The mob broke into hardware stores in search of arms; soldiers were pelted with snowballs and pieces of ice; military picquets came under attack, and revolver shots were fired at a streetcar. The civil authorities were reluctant to read the Riot Act, but on General Lessard's arrival notices were posted warning the public against taking part in unlawful assemblies. Matters reached a climax on the evening of 1 April, when riots again broke out. Troops moving through the streets to break up gatherings of civilians were bombarded with ice and bricks and missiles of various kinds. Some of the rioters opened fire. The soldiers had displayed great steadiness and forbearance under grave provocation; now, after several of their number had been wounded, they were ordered to return the fire with rifles and machine-guns. Four members of the crowd were killed and many others injured; 58 were arrested. Order was restored by one o'clock in the morning, and by daybreak the troops had returned to barracks.³⁶ An Order in Council, passed on 4 April, strengthened the hands of the military authorities in dealing with the situation or any similar disturbances that might occur in the future. Happily no further incidents occurred.

The Quebec disturbances were thoroughly aimed in Parliament. Opposition members criticized the government's use of the Order in Council to enforce its wishes, and the administration of the Military Service Act came under fire from both sides of the House. In general it seems fair to say that the riots of the Easter week-end arose from the tactless way in which the Act had been administered. Subsequently civil and church authorities in Quebec were active in bringing home to the people the futility and danger of any further demonstrations, and before long the Quebec riots passed into history.

Meanwhile across the Atlantic the war continued, and the Canadian Overseas Minister (Kemp) was experiencing some concern about the declining number of reinforcements arriving from Canada. On 27 March he had cabled the Minister of Militia (Mewburn) suggesting that 15,000 infantry and 200 cavalry reinforcements should leave for England by the end of April. But the Military Service Act was not producing men in sufficient numbers to meet such a demand and on 8 April Mewburn was forced to admit that the "trouble at Quebec has somewhat deranged plans". The best that could be done was to "hope" that 4900 men (including 1740 despatched on 25 March) would reach the United Kingdom during April or early in May Kemp's reaction to this news could be anticipated,

and the reply which he sent through the Prime Minister to the Minister of Militia and Defence on 12 April reflected his dissatisfaction and uneasiness:

For your information reinforcements situation as follows—

Available in France	9,000
Available in England	4,100 in April
	10,400 in May
	3,300 in June

This will involve despatch of men overseas with only eight [instead of the usual twelve to fifteen] weeks' training which is most undesirable. Unless 15,000 infantry reinforcements arrive before May 1st practically no trained infantry reinforcements available after July 1st. Anticipated casualties will be heavy in immediate future and doubtful if number at present in sight will be sufficient to maintain infantry of Corps at establishment beyond June 1st.³⁷

On the same day Borden received another message from Kemp stating that Lord Derby, the Secretary of State for War, was of the opinion that the general war picture was "very serious but not critical". Kemp was replying to a request which he had received from Borden on 11 April seeking "information as to conditions and probabilities" as "we are all terribly disturbed and depressed by the continuing success of the German drive".³⁸

The contents of these communications, along with information from other secret reports, convinced Borden that the time had come to impress upon the Canadian people the gravity of the situation. Accordingly, on 12 April, he informed Lloyd George (in a message sent through the Governor General) that it would be helpful if the British Prime Minister could supply a statement which he might use at a secret session of the Canadian House of Commons to be held within a week. On the 15th of the month, Borden told Kemp that this session would be held on the 17th and asked for a comprehensive report on the Canadian reinforcement situation. Kemp replied the same day and on the 16th sent Borden a further message in which he noted that Currie was "very anxious over situation . . . Expects enemy may make heavy attack southeast Arras with a view of cutting of Canadian Corps." After giving the dispositions of the Canadian divisions in France the message went on: "Presume question you have to consider is whether Americans should be allowed to monopolize space for transport their troops or whether you should accelerate enlistment next Class under Act if unable to Secure sufficient reinforcements under Class already called." Also on the 16th, Lloyd George passed Borden a detailed and up-to-date account of the British and Allied position. With this material before him the Canadian Prime Minister gave the secret session a long and revealing statement regarding conditions overseas. Having dealt with the deteriorating reinforcement situation he announced the Government's conclusion that, if the Canadian Corps was to be maintained as an effective fighting force, additional measures must be taken. One of the first of these was to be the cancellation of all exemptions granted under the Military Service Act.³⁹

Although Borden had been confident that the "mere fact" of holding a secret session would "arouse our people", it is doubtful if the general public became really impressed until 19 April when, in an open session of the House of

Commons, he again dealt with the matter.⁴⁰ On that day he tabled a “proposed” Order in Council which noted that, as there was “an immediate and urgent need of reinforcements for the Canadian Expeditionary Force and the necessity for these reinforcements admits of no delay”, it was the intention to cancel exemptions already granted under the Military Service Act and to lower the age of the draft from 20 to 19. In addressing the House, the Prime Minister described the serious difficulties being encountered by the Allies and gave particulars of the contributions being made by the United Kingdom and the Dominions to the war effort. He dealt at length with Canada’s role and gave the House statistics of the number of recruits obtained and sent overseas and the casualties suffered by the C.E.F.

Next the Prime Minister turned to the contents of the Order in Council. While admitting that the Military Service Act had been based upon the principle of exemption by tribunals, he pointed out that since it had been necessary to staff these with men having “no previous experience in any such task. . . naturally and inevitably the decisions of the various tribunals were attended with a great deal of inequality and sometimes with very marked injustice.”* Because of these wholesale exemptions the results obtained by the Act had not been as satisfactory as anticipated. With regard to the reinforcement situation, he declared (citing Kemp): “The need is urgent, so urgent that without this Order in Council I do not believe we could provide them with reinforcements after the first day of July next, and if the attack comes, as it may come, within the next two weeks, we might be left without any reinforcements after the first day of June.”⁴²

To have amended the Military Service Act by the normal legislative process would have entailed more delay than the urgency of the reinforcement situation would seem to permit. But when the Prime Minister moved that the House of Commons should approve by resolution the proposed Order in Council, he was opposed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who in a bitter passage termed the resolution a wide departure from the “principle of constitutional government” and challenged the authority of “the Governor in Council to alter an Act of Parliament”. Nevertheless, the House agreed to the resolution on the 19th and a similar resolution passed in the Senate the same evening.⁴³ The Order in Council having been approved by resolution of both Houses was dated 20 April and came into force. On 28 June 1918 the Supreme Court of Alberta ruled that the Order had not the force of law. A further Order in Council was therefore issued on 5 July ruling that the Order of 20 April should have effect despite adverse judicial decisions by any court;⁴⁴ when a test case was appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada on 18 July, four judges out of six upheld the Government.⁴⁵ The full effect of the new regulations was not apparent until June 1918, when 10,290 reinforcements proceeded overseas (in May the number had been 5202). During July 11,158 left Canada and this was increased to 13,977 in August.⁴⁶

At this point some reference must be made to the documentation of draftees and the policies, not always in agreement, followed by H.Q., O.M.F.C.

* The Report of the Military Service Branch reveals that for the whole country the number of claims for exemption was 93.7 per cent of the total registration, and that local boards allowed exemptions on more than 84 per cent of these claims.⁴¹

and Militia Headquarters in Ottawa with respect to distinguishing between draftees and volunteers.

During October 1917 the Officer-in-Charge of Overseas Records recommended dispatching a message to Canada suggesting that either a distinguishing prefix letter or a special series of regimental numbers be allotted to draftees. The Adjutant General, O.M.F.C., was favourably impressed by the idea, but his views were not shared by the G.O.C. Canadians, who rejected the proposal in the following terms: "Not approved; policy unsound." General Turner was determined to discourage further attempts to separate volunteers from draftees and, in January 1918, a circular letter was sent to all commanding officers in the United Kingdom directing that, as "the reinforcements shortly arriving from Canada will be men who have enlisted under the new Military Service Act, the General Officer Commanding wishes you to take action which will ensure that all ranks under your Command will accord these reinforcements the same treatment and goodwill as has been extended to those who, in the past, enlisted under voluntary conditions. Any inclination to treat those reinforcements arriving in future in a manner that would harbour ill feeling is to be dealt with, at the outset, promptly and severely."⁴⁷

No similar action was taken in Canada; on the contrary Militia Headquarters decided that it was desirable for purposes of administration to distinguish between men who enlisted voluntarily and those who had been drafted. Accordingly, in January 1918, a policy was adopted which saw volunteers continuing to be attested on the usual C.E.F. Attestation Paper (M.F.W. 23) and the introduction of a new form, "Particulars of Recruit Drafted under Military Service Act 1917" (M.F.W. 133), for use in the case of draftees. At the same time units were ordered to divide that part of their semi-monthly and monthly returns taking men on strength (or discharging them) into two sections: "voluntary enlistments" and "men obtained under the Military Service Act".⁴⁸

Although no blocks of regimental numbers were set aside for the draftees, the majority of the men received numbers in the 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 series, which had been allotted to the Depot Battalions organized after the passage of the Military Service Act to receive infantry recruits and draftees. Yet these blocks did not become the exclusive property of draftees; some of the numbers were also issued to volunteers taken on the strength of Depot Battalions. At the same time, some draftees were given regimental numbers from other series.* The complications arising from this situation caused Militia Headquarters to direct that "In all correspondence with Headquarters relating to men drafted under the Military Service Act, the letter "D" should be prefixed to the regimental number of the man referred to."⁵⁰ Some Records Officers, misinterpreting the directive, began inserting the prefix before regimental numbers on the documents of draftees. In May 1918, however, on receiving

* The 2nd Depot Battalion, British Columbia Regiment, for example, was not allotted numbers within the 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 blocks, but was ordered to give draftees the unused numbers in a series originally allotted to reinforcement drafts (raised by the 30th B.C. Horse and the 50th, 88th and 102nd Regiments) which had been absorbed into the Depot Battalion during 1917.⁴⁹

complaints from Headquarters O.M.F.C. that use of the prefix was contrary to the overseas policy of treating all soldiers alike, Militia Headquarters stopped this unauthorized practice.⁵¹

One of the major problems in enforcing the Military Service Act was that of dealing with the many defaulters. These included men who failed to register, or who defaulted a subsequent order to report for medical examination or for military duty, or became deserters. Nearly 28,000 men in Class 1 were offenders in one of these respects.⁵² To seek out and apprehend so large a number was beyond the capabilities of the existing police force, and the temporary enlargement of the Dominion Police to permit the formation of a special plain clothes body was authorized for the purpose in January 1918.⁵³ In June this special force was transferred to the Department of Militia and Defence and became the Civil Branch of the Canadian Military Police Corps. The police were faced with a difficult task. In attempting to find men who had not registered they had to proceed without even the names of the culprits. Many defaulters went into hiding in the northern wilds of Ontario and the forested areas of Quebec and the Pacific Coast, where apprehension was expensive and slow. In the face of alarming statements concerning the situation in Quebec, the Director of the Military Service Branch was careful to point out that although registrars in that province had received many letters purporting to give information about unregistered defaulters, investigations had failed to disclose one actual case.⁵⁴

On the grounds that delinquents under the Military Service Act had acted largely through ignorance or the bad advice of ill-disposed persons, on 2 August 1918 the Government granted an amnesty to all defaulters and deserters who would report on or before 24 August.⁵⁵ In all 5477 persons gave themselves up under this temporary amnesty, but when hostilities ended there were still some 20,000 Class 1 men who had neither reported nor been apprehended.⁵⁶ On 22 December 1919, when a general amnesty was proclaimed for all offenders under the Military Service Act, an estimated 15,000 were still at large, with about the same number serving prison sentences.⁵⁷

It remains to examine the results of the Military Service Act - to answer the often-put question, "How many men did the Act make available for military service?" Statistics furnished by the two departments of the Government which were most closely concerned with the operation of the Act are at some variance; and interpretations which have from time to time been placed on these figures have tended to minimize the total number of men which the Act placed on the strength of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

The table which appears as Appendix "E" to this volume compares the statistics provided by the Department of Justice and the Department of Militia and Defence. The table is based on the report made to the Minister of Justice by Lt.-Col. Machin, the Director of the Military Service Branch, and on a series of memoranda issued by the Militia Department. It is carefully documented, and for figures which have not appeared in published sources detailed explanations show how these were determined.

From a total of 401,882* of Class 1 registrations (no other classes were called up) a succession of deductions are made for one cause or another until the final net figure is reached. Colonel Machin's report shows that more than half the number who registered, or 221,949 men, were granted exemption on various grounds; a further 24,139 defaulted and were not apprehended; and 26,225 who were considered by the Military Service Branch of the Department of Justice to be "available for instant call" had not been called when hostilities ceased on 11 November 1918. These deductions left a total of 129,569 who reported for military service, of whom 8445 were permitted to enlist in British forces, leaving a net figure of 121,124 taken on strength the Canadian Expeditionary Force. (The comparable figure given by the Department of Militia and Defence is 124,588.)

But not all these men served. Some 16,000 were struck off strength upon being found medically unfit or otherwise eligible for exemption. They were "returned to Registrar's records" so that they might again be ordered to report for duty if changing circumstances made this necessary. Their departure left 108,288 men who were available for service with units of the C.E.F. By 11 November normal wastage, such as would apply equally to volunteers, had brought the discharge of 8637 of these, thereby reducing to 99,651 the number of drafted men on the strength of the C.E.F. when the war ended. This figure included 16,296 to whom the army had granted harvest or compassionate leave without pay, and whose leave had not expired. It is clear that any appraisal of the number made available by the Act must include these men; all were subject to recall from leave had the need for overseas drafts continued.

It will be remembered that the objective set the Military Service Act was the raising of a maximum of 100,000 reinforcements. An Order in Council issued on 10 August 1918 took pains to define reinforcements as "men ultimately selected and actually despatched for Overseas service". The order specified that the Act should continue to operate until it had produced and despatched from Canada "not less than one hundred thousand efficient soldiers for overseas service".⁵⁸ According to figures of the Department of Militia and Defence the number of draftees that proceeded overseas was 47,509, of whom 24,132 were taken on strength of units serving in France. There seems no doubt whatever that had the demand persisted, the objective of sending 100,000 draftees overseas would have been achieved. But the fighting in 1918 had not produced the heavy Canadian casualties that had been expected. Indeed it had become possible, in August of that year, to instruct registrars in all districts outside the province of Quebec to stop temporarily the call of men in order that Quebec might catch up. Then in October, when full scale call-ups were about to start again, the outbreak of the influenza epidemic halted proceedings in most districts.⁵⁹

It must be concluded that while the administration of the Military Service Act was often inefficient and attended by many gross malpractices, the Act itself was neither a failure nor ineffective. Statistics show that it did produce the military results which it was designed to produce.

* For the source of this and other statistics cited see "References and Comments" to the table appearing in Appendix "E" (p. 552).

Administrative Changes Overseas

We now recross the Atlantic to see what changes took place in the administration of the Canadian forces overseas during the last two years of the war. A previous chapter has described the organization late in 1916 of the Headquarters Overseas Military Forces of Canada, and the appointment of Sir George Perley as Minister (above, p. 210). First for our present consideration is the appointment of a new Overseas Minister and the creation of an Overseas Military Council.

Before the general election of 1917, Sir George Perley had repeatedly urged Borden to remove what he considered the stigma of "Acting" from his title. "I have struggled so long with the little understood name of 'Acting High Commissioner'", he wrote the Prime Minister in June, "that I should like to be actually appointed to that position before I quit. . . In case of an election I shall have to decide whether to go home for it and if I have been of service over here I thought you might like to confirm my status here or so arrange that I need not continue to have a constituency to look after . . ." *⁶⁰

Borden, confronted with the greatest political crisis of his career and troubled with ill health, did not reply until the first week in August. He warned Sir George that nothing could be settled with respect to changes in the government until after prorogation.⁶¹ It seems likely that Perley, who was himself working under great strain and was not in good health, did not fully understand the difficulties confronting Borden and the Unionists. By September he had decided not to return to Canada for the election. He complained to Borden that his additional duties as Overseas Minister were too heavy to continue and suggested the solution was to "make me High Commissioner [and] appoint another Overseas Minister".⁶² On 9 October, however, after a much needed holiday, he cabled Borden offering to continue as Overseas Minister lest a change "might prejudicially influence soldiers' vote".⁶³

But the cable was four days too late - on 5 October Borden had arranged for Sir Edward Kemp to become Overseas Minister and Major-General S. C. Mewburn to take over the portfolio of Militia and Defence in Ottawa. Perley became High Commissioner. Though warned that "it may be necessary within six months or year to make different disposition", Sir George continued to occupy the post until 1922.⁶⁴

The appointment of a new Overseas Minister provided a good opportunity to implement organizational changes which had been under study for some time. Not the least important of these was the formation, in May 1918, of an Overseas Military Council to "ensure more complete co-ordination in the administration of all parts of the Canadian Army".⁶⁵ The new Council bore little resemblance, either in composition or performance, to the Acting Sub-Militia Council established by Sir Sam Hughes in 1916 (above, p. 207). Formed "on the

* Sir George was concerned that in an election based on the conscription issue his constituency of Argenteuil, in which nearly half the voters were French-Canadian, might be difficult to retain. His suggested solution was that Borden appoint him "to one of the vacant Ontario Senatorships".

same principle and having the same functions as the Militia Council at Ottawa”, its main purpose was to serve in an advisory capacity to the Overseas Minister.⁶⁶ It consisted of a chairman, vice-chairman, four members and two associate members; the Overseas Minister was allowed to fill all these positions at his own discretion.*⁶⁸ The membership of the Council changed very little throughout its existence, though in April 1919 two more members were added - Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Currie and Lt.-Col. T. Gibson, the Assistant Deputy Minister O.M.F.C.⁷⁰

The subjects with which the Overseas Military Council dealt were of such a varied nature “as not readily to admit of classification”. A report on the Council’s activities listed a wide range of matters receiving consideration: “organization and policies, financial and other arrangements with the British Government, expenditures of an extraordinary nature, the write-off or charge to individuals of losses of public property, pay and allowances, establishments of all units and formations, and confirmation of all promotions and appointments within the O.M.F. of C.”⁷¹

The formation of the Overseas Military Council brought a change in designation of the appointment held by Sir Richard Turner. It will be recalled that in 1916 Turner had been named “General Officer Commanding Canadians” in the United Kingdom. General Turner’s functions, however, extended beyond the administration of the Canadian Forces in the British Isles. The Overseas Minister required “not only a military advisor but also an executive military officer” who could give effect to whatever policies the Minister approved?² After considering the titles “General Officer i/c Administration, Overseas Military Forces of Canada” (proposed by the Deputy Minister) and “Chief of Staff” (Turner’s own preference), Kemp settled upon “Chief of the General Staff” to describe Turner’s appointment, and the War Office was so informed early in May.⁷³

The Canadian Section, G.H.Q.

Meanwhile another important development in the administration of Canadian troops overseas was under consideration. This was the establishment of a Canadian Section at General Headquarters in France. The move had a dual significance. It established a close liaison between the O.M.F.C. and the British headquarters responsible for the tactical employment of Canadian troops; and it was an important step in the evolution of Canada’s control over her own forces.

There had been a Canadian representative at General Headquarters since

* The original composition of the Council was as follows: Chairman, the Minister O.M.F.C., Sir Edward Kemp; Vice-Chairman, the Deputy Minister O.M.F.C., Colonel Walter Gow; Members, the Chief of Staff, Lt.-Gen. Sir Richard Turner, the Adjutant General, Maj.-Gen. P. E. Thacker, the Quartermaster General, Brig.-Gen. D. M. Hogarth, and the Accountant General, Col. W. R. Ward. The Associate Members were the Director General of Medical Services, Maj.-Gen. G. L. Foster, and the Paymaster General, Brig.-Gen. J. G. Ross. Major G. S. Harrington was the Secretary.⁶⁷

† In October 1918 Gow resigned as Deputy Minister and Col. G. S. Harrington took his Position. Harrington was replaced as Secretary to the Council by Capt. L. P. Sherwood.⁶⁹

January 1915, when Sir Max Aitken was appointed to deal with “records generally appertaining to the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Forces and particularly the reporting of all casualties occurring therein”.⁷⁴ In September 1915 Aitken became officially known as “General Representative for Canada at the front”, while continuing to perform essentially the same function. Sir Robert Borden saw Aitken’s duties as giving “the public of Canada an account of the performance of the Canadian Troops”.⁷⁵ Sir Max generally referred to his position as the “Canadian Eye-Witness”, and for the period after September 1915 as the “Record Officer”. On being created Baron Beaverbrook in January 1917 he relinquished the post of General Representative. In addition to his other duties he established the Canadian War Records Office and was one of the founders of the Canadian War Memorials Fund. Each of these deserves some mention.

The Canadian War Records Office was founded in January 1916, when Prime Minister Borden authorized Sir Max Aitken to spend \$25,000 on the project.⁷⁶ As distinct from the Canadian Record Office, which was “the home of the bare facts of the civil and military career of every member of the forces”, the War Records Office was “the home of the History of Canada’s War”. While the former compiled statistics and other records and registered the location of graves, the latter was concerned with the custody of documents giving “the story of what the army has done”.⁷⁷

Of the several sections into which the Canadian War Records Office was divided, one of the most important was the Historical Section. Besides being concerned with collecting, filing and referencing all documents of a historical nature it supplied a contemporary record of Canada’s war effort. Sir Max himself wrote and published the first two volumes of Canada in Flanders, which appeared in 1916 and 1917: Other publications included Canada in Khaki and the Canadian War Pictorial. Any “loss in accuracy” resulting from the contemporary nature of these accounts, Aitken considered, would be made up for by a “gain in vividness”. Perhaps the most popular venture of this nature was the Canadian Daily Record, a daily newspaper for the troops in the field. By August 1917 its circulation had passed 12,500 copies.⁷⁸

In January 1917 Lt.-Col. R. F. M. Sims succeeded Lord Beaverbrook as General Representative. A definition of his duties showed him representing the Overseas Minister in all matters at British General Headquarters, France; acting as liaison officer between the Minister, the War Office and the Canadian Corps; and providing a channel of direct communication on domestic matters between the Canadian Overseas Ministry in London and the Canadian Corps.⁷⁹ For carrying out these tasks the Canadian Representative had a staff of three officers and 22 other ranks. The inclusion in his establishment of three horses and eight motor cars arose from the necessity of providing transportation for the numerous high-ranking Canadian officials who from time to time came to visit the troops in France.⁸⁰

* A third volume, written by Charles G.D. Roberts, was published in 1918.

Late in 1917 the Overseas Ministry initiated the move which was to bring the administration of Canadian forces more closely under Canadian control. A memorandum to the War Office in November stated that in future it was planned to have "all questions relating to appointments . . . promotions, transfers, exchanges, recalls and demands for officers, affecting the Canadian Forces in the Field, pass from the senior officer of the Canadian formation concerned direct to the Canadian Representative, G.H.Q. for transmission to the Minister, O.M.F.C.... and not pass through the higher British commands with which the Canadian formations are serving". It was the Canadian view that decisions of the Overseas Minister should "be accorded the same significance in regard to the Canadian Force as similar communications from the War Office regarding British Forces."⁸¹ In reply the War Office proposed a conference to arrange details, and Sir Douglas Haig suggested that the Minister of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada should go to France to discuss the matter.⁸²

Both the conference and the visit to France were postponed while Canadian officials sought "a clear conclusion . . . as to what will best meet the needs of the situation from the Canadian standpoint."⁸³ A meeting of the heads of various branches in the O.M.F.C. at Argyll House on Tuesday 19 March 1918 decided that a Canadian Section at G.H.Q. was the best solution, and on 2 April Sir Edward Kemp and his chief administrative officers met War Office representatives and reached a general agreement. The solution, which contained three basic principles, was then embodied in a letter to Sir Douglas Haig. The Canadian authorities made it clear that they did not wish to interfere in military operations; the proposed changes would affect only the organization and administration of Canadian troops. On matters relative to military operations, including the allotment of reinforcements, establishments and senior appointments, the Canadians would be glad to have recommendations from G.H.Q. Finally, the duties of the Canadian Representative at G.H.Q. were to be taken over by the Officer-in-Charge of the Canadian Section.⁸¹ Formation of the new organization was announced in June 1918, and the Section began functioning in July. It included representatives of the Adjutant General, the Quartermaster General, the Military Secretary, and the Medical, Chaplain and Pay services. Brig.-Gen. J. F. L. Embury was appointed Officer-in-Charge.

In the short period between its establishment and the Armistice, the Canadian Section proved its value. It provided a direct channel of communication between the Ministry, O.M.F.C. and G.H.Q., as well as a channel between these bodies and the heads of Canadian formations in the Field. Under direction from the O.M.F.C. Ministry it was responsible for supervising the various Canadian Administrative Services and Departments in the Field, and was empowered to take executive and administrative action regarding the control of personnel of the Canadian Forces in the Field. The Section did not cease to function with the Armistice. In dealing with the complex problems of demobilization its usefulness was again fully demonstrated.⁸⁵

The Canadian War Memorials Fund

Intimately connected with the Canadian War Records Office, though not an integral part of it, was the Canadian War Memorials Fund. The Fund was established by Lord Beaverbrook at the end of 1916, with the approval of Sir George Perley and the Canadian Prime Minister.

The Committee formed to administer the Fund included besides Sir Max two prominent British newspaper proprietors, Lord Rothermere and Sir Bertram Lima. Lady Perley and Sir Edmund Walker (President of the Canadian Bank of Commerce) were later members of the Committee. The founders of the fund hoped to assemble a collection of paintings, photographs and moving-picture films which would give "a more vivid, truthful, and lasting impression than can be done even by the written word" respecting the efforts displayed by Canadians during the war.⁸⁶ A Photographic Section of the War Records Office had been formed in April 1916 with the appointment of the first official photographer to serve with the Canadian Corps in France. A cinematographic section followed in a few months.

Lord Beaverbrook's Committee at once set to work to put the War Memorials Fund on a sound financial basis. It borrowed a large number of official photographs from the Canadian War Records Office and had large and expensive enlargements made from them. These were placed on exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in London, and the showing was powerfully advertised by the newspapers controlled by Lords Beaverbrook, Rothermere and Northcliffe and Sir Bertram Lima. The enterprise was a tremendous success, and netted a considerable surplus over the cost of making the enlargements and staging the exhibition. With this money the Committee acquired paintings of Canadian War interest, which were exhibited to raise additional funds. Further revenue for the Fund came from the sales of *Canada in Khaki* and the first two volumes of *Canada in Flanders*. (The cost of printing and publishing the latter was borne personally by Lord Beaverbrook.) There was a small profit on the sale of official photographs to Canadian soldiers, and a greater one on similar sales to the press of the Allied countries. A number of interested individuals also contributed to the Fund.⁸⁷

Under the auspices of the War Memorials Fund Lord Beaverbrook obtained permission from the Overseas Minister to appoint war artists and grant them honorary rank (not higher than that of major). Among those selected were two artists who were later to become members of the Canadian "Group of Seven" - A. Y. Jackson and F. H. Valley. The art which the Fund collected included the work of 108 artists. The most important acquisitions were four paintings - "The Death of Wolfe", by Benjamin West, presented by the owner, the Duke of Westminster; "Thayeadanegea" (Joseph Brant), by Romney; "Sir Alexander Mackenzie", by Sir Thomas Lawrence; and "Lord Amherst", by Reynolds. After the Armistice the Fund's holdings, described by Sir Edward Kemp as the "finest collection of war paintings and photographs of any of the Allied Nations", were transferred to Ottawa.⁸⁸

Financial Agreements with the War Office

We conclude this chapter with a brief examination of Canada's contribution towards the cost of maintaining her forces overseas.

When on 1 August 1914 Canada tentatively offered to provide an overseas contingent in the event of war, the Dominion Government had suggested making "all necessary financial provision" for the "equipment, pay and maintenance" of such a force.⁸⁹ The British Government agreed to the suggestion, and in November 1914 the War Office issued provisional instructions for recovering expenditures incurred in meeting the requirements of Canadian troops while in the United Kingdom, but specified only such direct charges as the cost of clothing, stores, horses, hospital treatment and billeting. No charge was to be made for accommodation (other than billeting), barrack stores, hospital stores, or for transporting troops by land and sea after their arrival in Britain.⁹⁰

Formal discussions between the two governments opened in March 1915, with the Canadians insisting that they defray the "entire cost in every particular of their own contingents"⁹¹ It took the rest of 1915 and most of 1916 for the Acting High Commissioner, Sir George Perley, to draw up with the War Office an agreement which was finally approved on 24 January 1917.⁹² It specified that Canada provide the pay, allowances and pensions of her troops and defray the cost of transporting them and material to the United Kingdom. There were two main changes from the provisional arrangement of November 1914. In addition to paying the actual cost of all supplies and stores issued in Great Britain, Canada would reimburse the British Government for transportation of Canadian troops and material on British railways. For all accommodation (whether in hutments or billets) and for barrack and hospital stores the British Government decided to make no charge.

At the same time the cost of maintaining Canadian forces in France was considered. Once troops crossed the Channel the adjustment could not be as simple or exact as in the United Kingdom, for it would obviously be impracticable to maintain a record of actual issues made to Canadians from numerous British Army depots on the Continent. The matter was solved by introducing a capitation rate. The War Office proposed a rate of six shillings per man per day. Of this amount, five shillings was reckoned as the average cost (excluding pay, allowances and pensions) of maintaining a British soldier in the field. It took into account rations, forage, fuel, clothing, and stores of all kinds; all ammunition except artillery; the replacement of small arms, guns, horses, mules, mechanical transport and wagons; and the transportation of troops from England to France and rail transportation on the Continent. The other shilling was to cover the cost of artillery ammunition used by Canadian forces (except for that fired by siege batteries being manned by Canadian personnel furnished at the request of the War Office).

This arrangement was subject to one reservation: the rate of six shillings would continue "unless conditions should so alter as to make it clearly unfair

either to the Imperial or the Dominion Government".⁹³ In a very short time the British Government found it necessary to request a revision. On 2 March 1917 the War Office informed the Canadian High Commissioner that the one-shilling rate for artillery ammunition (which had been based on the average expenditure of shells up to the end of March 1916) was unrealistic.⁹⁴ Consumption by Canadian artillery units had risen from one shilling a day to 6s. 7d. for the three-month period 1 July-30 September 1916 (which included the Battle of the Somme with its tremendous artillery programmes). Sir George Perley was told that Australia and New Zealand had agreed to a revised rate of payment, and he was asked that Canada should not only increase its capitation rate for artillery ammunition, but that the new rate should be made retroactive to 4 November 1916 (the date of the War Office Letter which accompanied the memorandum presented to Canada on the 20th of that month).

There were prolonged negotiations between the two governments before settlement was reached on these two points. The British proposed the retention of the fixed five-shilling rate and the adoption of a variable rate for gun and howitzer ammunition which would depend upon the average daily Canadian consumption as revealed by quarterly returns.⁹⁵ Sir Robert Borden noted that this would add greatly to Canadian expenditures, but felt that since Australia and New Zealand had accepted the new arrangement, "we cannot decline".⁹⁶ Although in mid-July 1917 Sir George Perley considered that "the only point at issue" was whether such a revised rate should be made retroactive to the previous November,⁹⁷ it was not until March 1919 that Canada formally approved an increase. As to the effective date, Borden was distinctly hostile to the War Office's proposal that the revised rate should come into force on 4 November 1916. He insisted that any revision should date from 2 March 1917, the day on which the War Office "gave notice that new conditions had arisen".⁹⁸ This view found little favour with the British negotiators; on 29 June 1917 the Assistant Financial Secretary of the War Office pointed out to Sir George Perley that "the extent to which Canada would not pay her full share up to November last would be about three millions, and to March last another million [pounds]".⁹⁹

The matter remained in deadlock. In the United Kingdom the responsibility for representing Canada's views on such questions passed from the Acting High Commissioner to the Overseas Minister (above, p. 355). As the months went by there were frequent discussions in London, and an intermittent exchange of cables with Ottawa. Meanwhile the War Office continued to furnish the Canadian Government with periodical returns on Canadian expenditures of artillery ammunition, and in January 1919 the Canadian Government appointed a committee of accountants to examine the correctness of these. This committee duly certified the British figures, and on 15 August 1919 the War Office was informed that Canada would accept these accounts as representing her "financial share of the cost of ammunition expended in France from March 2nd, 1917, to November 11th, 1918".¹⁰⁰ The Canadian refusal to antedate to November 1916 the revision of the capitation rates was a matter of some regret to the War Office. "On our first capitation rate settlement", wrote the Assistant Financial Secretary

on 1 August 1919, “the Imperial Government lost a very considerable amount owing to our not having given formal notice to revise the figures in respect of gun ammunition until long after they were clearly inadequate.”¹⁰¹

The daily rate per man charged for artillery ammunition varied from one shilling (February 1915 to 1 Mar 1917) to a high of 4s. 4 3/4d. April-September 1918.¹⁰² An attempt by the War Office to increase the five-shilling rate on general items of maintenance from 1 July 1918 was successfully opposed by Ottawa.¹⁰³ The Canadian authorities argued that any upward revision for the last four months of the war would be offset by a reduction from 11 November 1918 to the date when Canadian troops left France. Although the War Office declared that the British Government would lose “nearly a million” pounds,¹⁰⁴ the five-shilling rate remained unaltered. The Dominion agreed however to make certain subsidiary settlements of special claims connected with the capitation rate.

Although for the maintenance of her forces overseas (including expenditures for artillery ammunition) Canada paid the British Government \$252,567,942.03.¹⁰⁵