

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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REPORT

OF THE

RETURNED SOLDIERS' AID  
COMMISSION

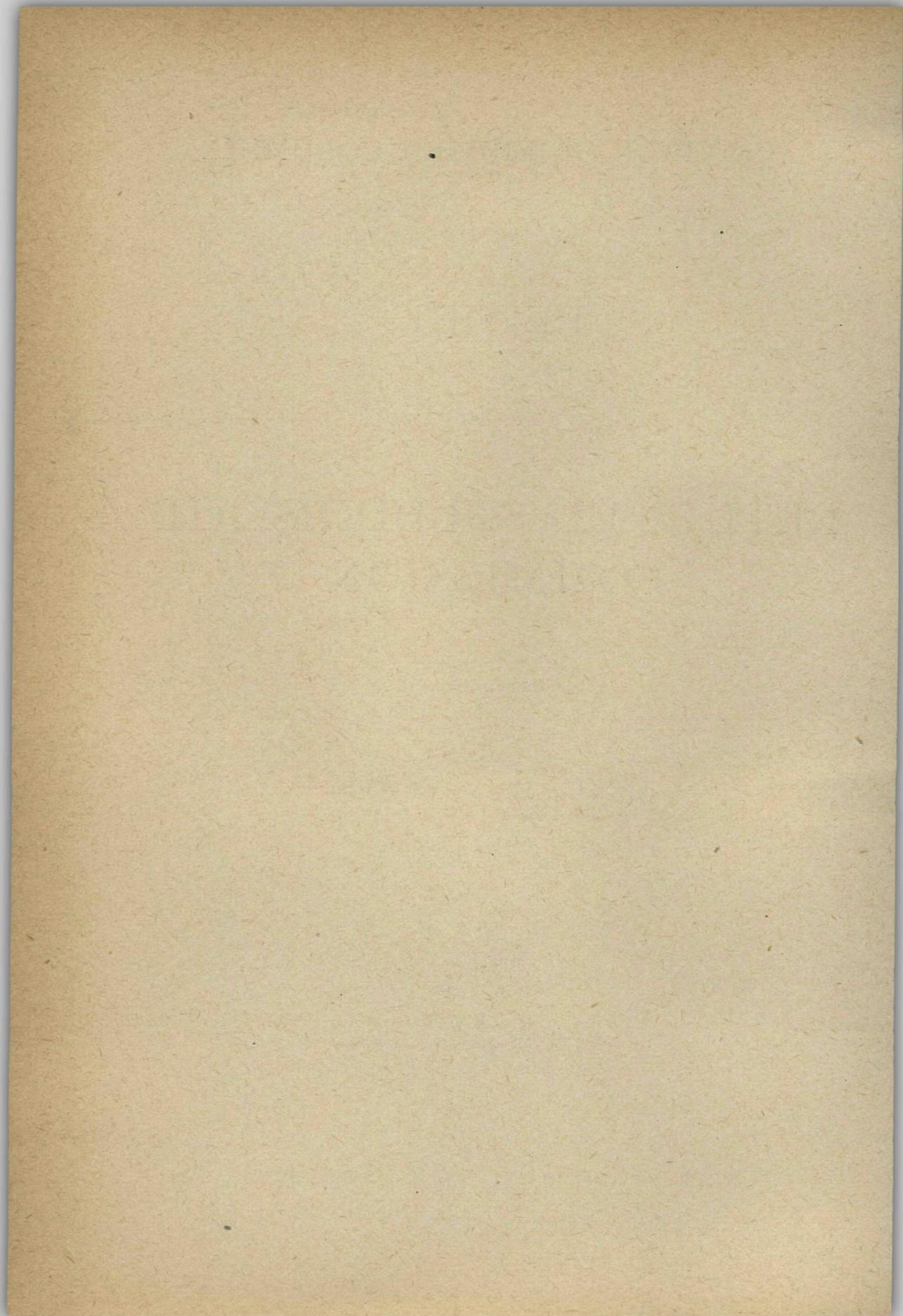
ON WORK PERFORMED TO

JANUARY 31ST, 1920



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VICTORIA, B.C. :  
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1920.



*To Colonel the Honourable EDWARD GAWLER PRIOR,  
A Member of the King's Privy Council for Canada,  
Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of British Columbia.*

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOUR:

The undersigned has the honour to present the Report on the activities of the  
British Columbia Returned Soldiers' Aid Commission to January 31st, 1920.

J. D. MACLEAN,  
*Provincial Secretary.*

*March 10th, 1920.*

VICTORIA, B.C., February 16th, 1920.

*The Hon. J. D. MacLean, M.D., C.M.,  
Provincial Secretary, Victoria, B.C.*

SIR,—I have the honour to submit herewith Report on the activities of the  
British Columbia Returned Soldiers' Aid Commission to January 31st, 1920.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

F. A. ROBERTSON,

*Chairman.*

## Report of British Columbia Returned Soldiers' Aid Commission.

The British Columbia Returned Soldiers' Aid Commission is an organization under the Department of the Provincial Secretary which renders aid in various ways to those men who have served in the late war, and also to the dependents of those who gave their lives in the service of their country. The necessity of such an organization will be appreciated when it is realized that after such a cataclysm as the world has experienced, which called for the manhood of the nation to leave their homes and civil occupations for a term of years, it was inevitable that considerable confusion would follow upon such an upheaval in the national life.

The early history of the Commission as contained in the published reports of 1916 and 1917 shows that the first activities of the various Provincial Returned Soldier Commissions throughout the Dominion were chiefly directed towards the devising of general policies relating to the re-establishment of the members of the Canadian Army and Navy on their return to civil life.

When the Commission was formed in November, 1915, the war was still in its earlier stages, and the general question of reconstruction had received little attention. It can therefore be readily understood that with the progress of time the activities of the Commission were directed along different lines as various policies regarding re-establishment were considered and finally adopted. Before giving an account of the present work of the Commission it will be of interest to recall some of the main problems that had to be confronted at the outset and note briefly how these were met.

The first question of importance was the finding of immediate employment for those men who were then returning home and who were able to work. To meet this problem local employment committees were formed in all the chief places in the Province. These local committees did much useful work not only in securing employment, but in looking after the interests generally of those men in their respective districts who were serving in the Forces. Many of these local committees have now ceased to exist, but in the majority of cases their secretaries act as representatives of the Commission.

A second problem was the providing of special or technical training for those who came home disabled and could not follow their previous occupations. A special committee of the Commission was appointed to consider the matter, but the problem was eventually solved by the Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment in taking over the whole matter of vocational training.

The question of placing the returned soldiers on the land received a great deal of attention from the Commission, and in conjunction with the Returned Soldier Commissions of the other Provinces of the Dominion strong recommendations were made to the Government at Ottawa, with the result that the "Soldier Settlement Act, 1917," was brought into force, while the Provincial Government enacted the "Soldiers' Land Act" and amended certain other existing Acts, making them more favourable for the returned men.

The general question of finding employment for returned men, which originally was in the hands of the various Provincial Returned Soldier Commissions, has received considerable attention from the Federal Department of Labour, resulting in co-operation between the Federal and Provincial Governments being provided for under the provisions of the "Employment Offices Co-ordination Act, 1918," and also an Order in Council passed at Ottawa, December 17th, 1918. In conformity with the scheme of the Dominion-Provincial Employment Service, the Government of British Columbia through the Provincial Department of Labour has already established Labour Bureaus at the following places: Vancouver, Victoria, Prince Rupert, Nanaimo, New Westminster, Nelson, Cranbrook, Fernie, Kamloops, Vernon, and Kelowna. At each of these offices there are representatives of both the Provincial Government and the Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment Department.

In addition to these four main questions just explained, numerous other matters have received and are still receiving much attention from the Commission. Many returned men have found difficulties in connection with their pay, separation allowances, pensions, gratuities, etc. As the head office of the Commission has been a central information bureau and clearing-house for straightening out difficulties, all returned men are invited to write to the Commission in connection with any troubles that they may have. The services of the staff are always at the disposal of such men, and the Commission, acting in the nature of an official friend, has

been instrumental in straightening out many tangles. In this connection mention should be made of the great amount of similar work being done by the Information and Service Branch of the S.C.R. and also by the various returned soldier organizations.

During the greater part of the present year a great deal of routine work was entailed by the efforts of the Commission to keep in touch with the great numbers of men returning to Canada. Upon the arrival of troop-ships from overseas the Commission was advised by wire by the military authorities at the ports of disembarkation of the names and destinations of the returning soldiers and also the addresses of their next of kin. This information was then relayed by mail or telegram throughout the Province to the places and parties interested.

During most of the period of demobilization a representative of the Commission met the troop-trains to this Province while en route, and gave to the men just returning such general information as they required. In this way most of the men, upon arrival at their destinations, were aware of the various regulations in force *re* pay, clothing allowance, gratuity, etc., and so the work of demobilization was greatly facilitated.

#### RELIEF.

It can be readily understood that with the progress of time the nature of the work of the Commission has necessarily changed. The demobilization of the Canadian Army is now practically an accomplished fact and attention should now be directed towards re-establishment. This, of course, is mainly a Federal question, and much has already been done by the Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment and other organizations, as has already been mentioned.

It was realized by the Provincial Government that in the necessary confusion immediately following demobilization there would undoubtedly be among the returned men and dependents of men who have been killed in the war a number of cases of urgent need, caused through exceptional circumstances, that could only be relieved by some sort of financial assistance. Consequently, at the last session of the Provincial Legislature a vote of \$250,000 was passed for patriotic purposes, and it was intended that this Commission should endeavour to grant such relief as each individual case merited.

It is not the policy of the Government or the Commission to undertake the whole burden of this relief-work throughout the Province. The fund set apart for that purpose would not last very long unless the work of the Commission were considered as supplementing voluntary subscriptions and local effort. Various allowances are made by the Canadian Patriotic Society and other organizations for relief. The policy of this Commission has been to grant relief when deserving only in such cases as are not provided for in any other way; in other words, to fill up the crevices that are left by other existing regulations.

In addition to granting direct financial assistance for relief, the Commission has endeavoured to co-ordinate the work of all existing relief organizations to prevent overlapping and to bring together the various agencies in a community that have as their aim the re-establishment of the returned soldiers in civil life. Letters were sent to the head office of the S.C.R. in the Province and also to soldier organizations, calling attention to the activities of the Commission and requesting that the information be brought to the attention of the various branches of these organizations throughout the Province. In this way co-operation has been secured which has been beneficial to all concerned.

In Victoria the Commission works harmoniously and in active conjunction with the Information and Social Welfare Branch of the S.C.R., also the Canadian Patriotic Aid Society, the Federated Service Council, and all soldier organizations. In Vancouver a similar policy is adopted with satisfactory results. In this connection special mention should be made of the Returned Soldiers' Club, which occupies the premises of the old Elysium Hotel. Rooms and meals are provided below cost, and in addition their Emergency Fund has been responsible for the relief of a great deal of distress amongst the returned soldiers. The Commission's representative in Vancouver, Mr. G. C. Hodge, has an office in the Court-house, and the present amicable working arrangement there is largely responsible for the satisfactory solution of the problem of giving relief in deserving cases without undue overlapping and waste of effort. In New Westminster all relief organizations are represented on a Central Committee, the Chairman of which is the President of the local Canadian Patriotic Branch and is also a member of the Commission. The Secretary is the local representative of the Commission and the arrangement works most satisfactorily.

In connection with this relief-work the hands of the Commission have not been tied by unnecessary red-tape. When urgent aid is required it is given promptly. Furthermore, the work is not carried out in any spirit of charity, as it is realized that in most instances the exceptional circumstances are due either directly or indirectly to a man's service in the war. However, no aid is recommended unless the applicant is willing and anxious to do everything possible to help himself, as it must be admitted by all that the sooner the discharged soldier is in a position to rely completely upon himself again, the better it will be both for the individual and the community.

Although numerous applications have been received from men who ask for an advance of capital to enable them to re-establish themselves in various lines of business, the funds of the Commission have not, unless in very exceptional instances, been devoted to such purpose. Not only is our fund inadequate to meet such demands, but we have not the organization or the machinery that would be necessary to handle securities. This however, is a feature of re-establishment that the Commission in conjunction with other bodies has urged upon the Federal Government to adopt.

*Statement of Relief Expenditures to January 31st, 1920.*

Total amount expended .....	\$44,616 02
Returned on above .....	2,150 39
Balance .....	<u>\$42,465 63</u>
Number of applicants receiving aid .....	950
Average amount to each, approximately .....	\$47 00

*Classification.*—For general information the following classifications, which have been estimated from the office records, are submitted as pertaining to the various applicants to whom aid has been granted:—

- (a.) Various reasons for granting aid:
- (b.) Family status of applicants:
- (c.) Sources from which information obtained:
- (d.) Provinces in which applicants enlisted:
- (e.) Branches of service:
- (f.) Places of service.

(a.) Reasons for granting aid—	No. of Cases.	Total Amount advanced.
Illness in family .....	385	\$17,255 00
Maternity cases .....	50	2,902 00
Desertions .....	12	2,714 00
Unemployment .....	235	5,988 00
Men on strength of S.C.R. for vocational training or treatment awaiting payment of allowances .....	30	990 00
Men or dependents awaiting overdue pension or war service gratuity cheques .....	60	2,927 00
Land settlers in absolute need of necessities .....	28	1,447 00
Death in family .....	14	1,008 00
Purchase of clothing .....	70	1,255 00
Miscellaneous .....	66	8,130 00
Totals .....	<u>950</u>	<u>\$44,616 00</u>
(b.) Family status of applicant—		
Married .....	747	\$29,074 00
Single .....	97	2,818 00
Widows ..	79	8,816 00
Widowers .....	9	856 00
Deserted wives .....	10	2,514 00
Orphan children .....	8	538 00
Totals .....	<u>950</u>	<u>\$44,616 00</u>

(c.) Case reported to Commission by—	No. of Cases.	Total Amount advanced.
Great War Veterans' Association .....	176	\$ 7,446 00
Army and Navy .....	40	3,212 00
Comrades of the Great War .....	28	1,120 00
Imperial Veterans' Association .....	185	6,495 00
Department of S.C.R. ....	57	4,434 00
Other organizations .....	63	3,150 00
Vancouver office of Commission .....	252	10,277 00
Representatives of Commission throughout the Province	76	5,105 00
Sundry (including personal applications to Victoria office of Commission .....	73	3,377 00
Totals .....	950	\$44,616 00
(d.) Province in which applicant, or soldier on whom applicant was dependent enlisted—		
Nova Scotia .....	3	\$ 135 00
New Brunswick .....	2	65 00
Quebec .....	12	835 00
Ontario .....	37	1,568 00
Manitoba .....	24	1,358 00
Saskatchewan .....	5	210 00
Alberta .....	49	1,909 00
British Columbia .....	790	37,320 00
Unknown (Imperials) .....	28	1,216 00
Totals .....	950	\$44,616 00
(e.) Branch of the Forces in which applicant, or soldier on whom applicant was dependent, served—		
C.E.F. ....	750	\$35,544 00
Imperial .....	168	7,844 00
Navy .....	32	1,228 00
Totals .....	950	\$44,616 00
(f.) Where applicant, or soldier on whom applicant was dependent, saw service—		
France .....	828	\$39,789 00
England .....	63	2,101 00
Canada .....	32	1,468 00
Unknown .....	27	1,258 00
Totals .....	950	\$44,616 00

## ADVANCES ON GRATUITIES.

In a number of instances advances have been made to men on their gratuities. This practice is not generally encouraged, as it is realized that the military regulation providing the payment of gratuities in monthly instalments is a wise one, as these payments coming in monthly help to secure living expenses during the interval between the date of a man's discharge and the time he establishes himself in some form of permanent employment. Many applications for advances on gratuities in lump sums have been made by men before taking employment. These we have had to generally refuse until such time as the applicant found employment.

However, in a great number of cases, the obtaining of gratuities in lump sums has been of material assistance in helping men to re-establish themselves either in business or on their own account, or to help furnish their homes. In short, whenever it can be shown that the obtaining of this gratuity in a lump sum, or a portion of it, would be a decided advantage to any discharged man, the advance is granted.

By a working arrangement with the Military Pay Office the applicant signs a letter authorizing the Pay Office to forward his cheque to this office. He also signs a power of attorney, so that when these gratuity cheques are received on their due dates they can be cashed and credited to our own bank account. In making these loans no discount rates are charged.

Up to the end of January, 1920, there has been advanced in this way on gratuities a total sum of \$305,496.10, a considerable portion of which has since been returned. The number of returned men to whom advances have been made is 1,269, the average to each being \$240.

*Statement of Advances on War Service Gratuities to January 31st, 1920.*

Total amount advanced to January 31st, 1920 .....	\$305,496 10
Amount returned on above to January 31st, 1920 .....	228,796 24
	\$ 76,699 86
Purposes for which money was advanced—	
To start business .....	349
To purchase tools and equipment to enable men to follow previous vocation .....	22
Emergency advances to tide over short periods of financial difficulties ...	104
Advances made to men on account of domestic troubles, principally illness .....	104
Confinement cases .....	22
Deaths .....	5
To get married .....	10
To enable students to continue studies .....	7
Settlers on land or in homes—	
Ten per cent. payment under S.S. Board .....	16
Payments on property and taxes on property owned previous to enlistment .....	62
Purchasing home .....	85
Furnishing home .....	206
Equipment, transportation, and general expenses in connection with settling on land .....	58
General business purposes .....	19
Transportation—	
To employment .....	107
To homes outside of Canada .....	63
Bringing dependents to British Columbia .....	26
Sending dependents to Old Country .....	4
	1,269

PERSONNEL OF COMMISSION.

The Commission was reorganized by Order in Council in November, 1919, and is at present composed of the following members, whose services, with the exception of the Chairman and the Secretary, are given without remuneration:—

Honorary Chairman .....	The Hon. J. D. MacLean, Provincial Secretary.
Chairman .....	Major F. A. Robertson, D.S.O.
Secretary .....	Geo. F. Pyke.
Members—	
Major W. B. Shaw .....	Victoria.
H. J. Young .....	„
T. M. Harnett .....	Vancouver.
W. J. Blake Wilson .....	„
H. L. W. Tupper .....	New Westminster.
Rev. A. E. Vert .....	„
Captain A. Leighton .....	Nanaimo.
Dr. G. B. Brown .....	„
Lt.-Col. S. P. McMordie .....	Prince Rupert.

The first meeting of the Commission as above constituted was held on December 10th, 1919. A report was submitted by the Chairman outlining the work of the Commission up to the end of November, 1919. The general policy followed in the administration of relief, etc., was unanimously approved.

It was pointed out that in certain cases financial assistance was urgently needed by some of those returned men who had taken up land under the Soldier Settlement Board. A wire was immediately dispatched to the Chairman of the S.S.B. at Ottawa, urging that steps be taken to ensure that such aid could be provided for through the new Federal Emergency Fund of \$40,000,000, arrangements for the disbursement of which were then being made through the Canadian Patriotic Society. We are glad to say that such an arrangement has since been effected.

Discussion on matters of general policy in connection with re-establishment resulted in the drafting of two resolutions which were unanimously approved, and which are herewith reproduced:—

(1.) *Re* aid to those men who wish to establish themselves in business other than farming: “*Resolved*, That the Federal Government be requested to enact legislation along the lines of the Soldier Settlement Board, to provide capital at a low rate of interest for those returned soldiers who wish to establish themselves in various businesses or industries.”

(2.) *Re* extension of vocational training: “Inasmuch as the Federal Government has recognized the necessity of specially caring for soldiers who joined the Forces under the age of eighteen years; and inasmuch as vocational training has been provided in such cases; and inasmuch as the education or training of large numbers of soldiers was interfered with and retarded by their devotion to duty; and inasmuch as the observation of this the British Columbia Returned Soldier Commission reveals the fact that an altogether unfair burden is being placed upon these men by refusing to grant to such men any measure of assistance towards rehabilitating themselves by completing their training or education; and inasmuch as it is not in the best interests of this country that such men should be added to the army of unskilled labour: Be it *Resolved*, That the Federal Government be approached with a view to having the age restriction removed, so that each and every soldier who can show that his opportunity to educate himself to fill the place to which his natural bent and inclination inclined him has been so retarded shall be given an opportunity to complete such education or training with the assistance of the Federal Government, either by a free grant or by a partial grant and partial loan; provided always that such continuation of education or training shall be under the supervision of the Federal Government.”

Copies of the above resolution were forwarded to the other Provincial Returned Soldier Commissions throughout Canada, also to the various returned soldier organizations, requesting co-operation, and it is hoped that such recommendations will not be without effect.

#### GENERAL CONDITIONS.

The Chairman of the Commission during the past year visited various parts of the Province to ascertain at first hand the condition of affairs as they related to the returned soldiers. On these trips public meetings were frequently addressed by him, partly to acquaint the public with the work and scope of the Commission, and also to help foster a spirit of co-operation amongst all those who could in any way help in the task of reinstating Canada's returned soldier citizens.

Generally speaking, employers of labour were found to be willing and anxious to co-operate as far as possible in this task, and it was almost an invariable rule that the returned men themselves did their part in taking hold of their new duties with a vim and determination which convinced employers that it was to their own best interests to give these men every possible chance to re-establish themselves.

It is gratifying to report, also, that outside of the Coast cities very little distress was found to exist amongst the returned soldiers throughout the Province. This was chiefly because there were very few men out of employment. Such deserving cases as were brought to his attention were promptly granted assistance. One could not but conclude that returned men who were anxious to re-establish themselves in civil life again would find better opportunities if they could get away from the congested centres, such as Vancouver and Victoria.

In conclusion, it should be remembered that everything that is attempted in the way of re-establishing the returned men must be based upon a sympathetic understanding of their position. Any one who leaves his customary business for even a few months can realize that it is difficult to resume immediately the normal routine of business. How much harder to settle down must it be for those thousands of young men who at the most restless period of life were transferred for a number of years to entirely new scenes, with new experiences and new objects in life. Added to this is the nervous strain occasioned by the ordeals of battle, hardships, and

a generally strenuous life. Life in the Army during the war was hard, oftentimes demanding the utmost limit of physical and mental endurance. Yet our gallant boys withstood temptation and conquered all difficulties. Their achievements have gained for the whole nation a measure of glory and world status that could not be purchased with the whole money resources of the country.

It is inevitable that when the returned soldier seeks to resume the normal life of peace-times he will meet many difficulties and discouragements. It is then that he will need sympathetic counsel and real encouragement. If, therefore, we have faith in the high average character of our soldiers, then let no man feel himself entitled to "live unto himself" until the defenders of his country have been given a chance to succeed in these new battles of civil life just as they successfully fought their way through all obstacles on the battle-fields of Europe.

## LOCAL COMMITTEE LIST.

F. J. R. Whitehelo, Pres., G.W.V.A. ....	Abbotsford.
The Reeve of the District of Kent .....	Agassiz.
A. M. Wastell, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Alert Bay.
J. M. Wright .....	Armstrong.
H. P. Christie, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Ashcroft.
J. A. Fraser, Government Agent .....	Atlin.
L. A. Dodd, Gold Commissioner .....	Barkerville.
Chas. Tucker, Dominion Constable .....	Bella Coola.
R. M. Edgar, Sec., Burnaby Soldiers' Welcome Home Com- mittee	411 Pender Street, Vancouver.
A. Leslie Coote, Pres., G.W.V.A. ....	Chilliwack.
The Reeve of Surrey .....	Cloverdale.
E. Henderson, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Coldstream, Vernon.
Robt. Newman, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Coquitlam Branch, Maillardville.
G. R. Bates, Sandwick .....	Courtenay.
W. A. Nisbet, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Cranbrook.
C. J. Bunbury, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Cumberland.
A. de R. Taylor, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Delta Branch, Ladner.
James Greig, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Duncan.
R. R. Gibbs, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Enderby.
G. H. Pullen, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Esquimalt.
J. Brown, Government Agent .....	Fairview.
Joseph Austin, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Fernie.
N. H. A. Parker, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Fraser Mills.
Wm. Mouat, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Ganges Harbour, Salt- spring Island.
H. V. Dartt, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Golden.
F. R. S. Barlee, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Grand Forks.
G. B. Taylor, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Greenwood.
Wm. Ansell, Box 32 .....	Haney.
J. W. Morrison, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Hazelton.
G. P. Jones, Chairman, Hedley Patriotic Commission ....	Hedley.
John How, Sec., G.W.V.A. ....	Kamloops.
J. W. Jones, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Kelowna.
W. H. Lembke, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Kerrisdale, Point Grey.
N. A. Morrison, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Ladysmith.
F. Macpherson, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Langley Branch, Murray- ville.
Samuel Gibbs, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Lillooet.
J. H. Anthony, Pres., R.S.E.C. ....	Lytton.
James Gibson, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Matsqui.
T. Watt .....	Merritt.
J. A. Barr, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Mission City.

LOCAL COMMITTEE LIST—*Continued.*

J. J. Cottle, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Nanaimo.
R. G. Joy, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Nelson.
W. J. Mackenzie, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	New Hazelton.
T. J. Thomas, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	New Westminster.
L. Watts Doney, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	North Vancouver.
A. H. Cutbill, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Peachland.
John Power, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Penticton.
His Worship Mayor Matheson .....	Phoenix.
Clerk of the Pitt Meadows Municipality .....	Pitt Meadows.
Fred Street, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Port Alberni.
L. S. Davies .....	Port Coquitlam.
J. J. Lye, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Port Moody.
Geo. R. Fisher, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Prince George.
Chas. L. Youngman .....	Prince Rupert.
P. W. Gregory, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Princeton.
Edgar C. Lunn, Government Agent .....	Quesnel.
His Worship Mayor McKinnon .....	Revelstoke.
M. MacKenzie, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Rossland.
S. M. McGuire, Sec., G.W.V.A. ....	Salmon Arm.
W. E. Gomm, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Sandon.
W. H. Dawes, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Sidney.
D. Cochrane, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Skidegate Inlet, Queen Charlotte City.
E. Graham, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Slocan City.
Captain R. L. Gale, Pres., G.W.V.A. ....	Smithers.
W. Scott Simpson, Indian Agent .....	Telegraph Creek.
J. Kircaldy, Pres., G.W.V.A. ....	Terrace.
E. F. Tregoning, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Trail.
T. M. Harnett, Manager, Returned Soldiers' Club .....	1140 Pender Street W., Vancouver.
E. A. Mitchell, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Vanderhoof.
Geo. W. Ross, Sec., R.S.E.C. ....	Vernon.
The Reeve of Summerland .....	West Summerland.

VICTORIA, B.C.:

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