

(January 24th, 1916.)

Interesting Facts and Problems in the Administration of the Patriotic Fund.

BY MR. W. C. NOXON.*

AT a regular meeting of the Club held on the 24th January, Mr. Noxon said:

Mr. President, and fellow citizens.—I don't know just how I should begin my remarks after what your President has said. I hope that all of you will look on this question something in the same manner as I do, and that you will realize when I tell you that it is not as a public speaker that I am here, nor am I here to court public attention nor the spotlight of publicity. I am here as a citizen of Toronto, as a British subject, temporarily donning the uniform of civic duty, to an end which seems far off. I cannot help, however, feeling a certain conscious pride when I look about me and find the characteristics in the Canadian faces. I know I should be thankful, and I assure you I am thankful, that I was born a Canadian. Sometimes I almost feel sufficiently enthusiastic for Canadianism that I would like to send some sort of mental recommendation to future generations of every country, if they cannot be born Canadians perhaps they can be born some other kind of British subjects. While I am patriotic on other interests, I might tell them to be brother Scotchmen; I am not reflecting upon my brother Irishmen or my brother Englishmen, because in my various trips to their native land I have yet to find a better sample or a better type than those born in Canada.

I also think it is well to be born in this century. It is not necessary to go back in German or Turkish History. It is quite sufficient to go back in English history, to find that the peace of those days was more unthinkably atrocious than the war of this time. It has sometimes struck me, and perhaps it has struck you, that this war has a great righteous element in it; whatever cause brought it about, I certainly feel sure Great Britain never had a more righteous or more just cause than she had for this present war. (Hear, hear and applause.)

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It would almost seem, to give brief expression to my ideas, that the Satanic Majesty has been sitting close to the throne of Germany for many years. This struggle is really between Christianity and idolatry. There is no doubt that the being to whom I have just referred has taken the ruler of that country into the realm of, imagination, and pointed out what he might gain in the conquest of the world, telling him, "You will succeed, under my instructions, and I will divinely appoint you the ruler of the world." The picture was very attractive, I am sure. I imagine he further said; "You must first inculcate into your German life the fact that you are divinely appointed. Your professors, your philosophers, everything must be permeated with the idea that you are a divine ruler. You must also get your people to understand that economy, thrift, and above all, efficiency, is the keynote to success; that with organized efficiency you can accomplish everything. Therefore you can secure your conscience and worship me. Organized efficiency is your strongest force." Then he gave him that gift, and called it "militarism," that idol. "You don't have need, however, to worry," he said. "At the appointed time, and when the hour is ripe, for this conquest to begin, I will open the gates of my kingdom for the perpetrators of the most hideous crimes, and they will be at your service." That he has fulfilled his promise, we know! But these hideous events will not change the course of history; not since the death, the birth and the resurrection of two thousand years ago will anything change the course of divine ordering of history, for this will be accomplished by justice. There is too great a respect for righteousness, too deep a respect for sympathy, for anything to alter this course and make it other than it was intended.

But I don't intend to speak of these matters, though they are attractive; they are not what you have come here to hear, but about something we are all in close touch with, our obligation, not only the one we owe in a sense to the war, because this nation, of which I have spoken, broke its word, but the one we owe to the men whom it is known, went to enlist because we gave them our promise to look after those left behind. I think it would ill become us to ask these men to continue at the front, to continue to defend the honor of the Empire, and we breaking our promise to them. I could not reconcile it myself.

When the Government asked men to enlist they said to them: We will give you \$33.00 a month, all found, and if you are married we will give you \$20.00 more. That will make \$53.00 a month. Out of this we will allow you to retain

\$18.00 for yourself to help smooth the road of hardship as a soldier. The other \$15.00 of your pay together with the \$20.00 separation allowance will go to your wife, making \$35.00 a month to her, but along comes a man who has a family and says "what will you give me" and the Government replies we will give you just the same as we do to a man without a family, but if the amount we give to a man with or without a family is not sufficient for their needs, then we will leave this extra need to the generous and patriotic spirit of those who remain at home. The Government does not make any allowance for the children of a soldier and that is precisely where the need is felt. This does not seem equitable and our work is largely devoted to that particular phase of the situation, providing and caring for the children of enlisted men. About 40c. on the dollar of our expenditure is for the maintenance of children.

You often hear it said, "if a Patriotic Fund be needed why does the Government not supply it?" There are two reasons:—

(First) A financial one.

(Second) What might be called Social and Fraternal.

There are 65,000 married men in the army at present and only a little over 25,000 families of married men on the Patriotic Fund in Canada, nearly 6,000 of these being located in the city of Toronto and County of York. The Government cannot distinguish between the wife of a millionaire or the wife of a coachman and if they were asked to provide the extra need of the 25,000 families now on the Fund they would require to provide a similar amount for the remaining 40,000 families who do not now require anything more than the Government pay. Thus you will see from a financial standpoint the operation of the Patriotic Fund is of very great advantage to the Government.

The Personal or Fraternal Side.—This is where the Government is fortunate in having from the Atlantic to the Pacific a large number of our best business and professional men giving both time and labor, without thought of reward, to the administration of this Fund. The committees in the various centres are in close touch with the circumstances and needs of the dependents and are able to use discretionary administration, the quality of which I doubt could be improved by replacing this voluntary staff with Government officials. It is questionable whether this magnificent volunteer staff could be replaced with advantages either on the score of economy or efficiency. Certainly not on the score of sympathetic treatment to the dependents.

These are the reasons why the Government does not administer this assistance; it would lessen the spirit of fraternalism. You know, as Anglo-Saxons, we have so much surplus loyalty and patriotism, that if the Government did not give us this outlet to work it out, it might be attracted where it would be much less valuable; in fact, it might die; you would simply say, "Oh, let the Government do these things." I am sorry for the patriotism of people who would say that; it is not strong enough.

The work of the Patriotic Fund I will describe in three parts: first, its creation, and why we supply it; second, its administrative principles, that is, the character and cause of its administration; and third, some instances of its operation. I am glad to say that one of your officers, Mr. John Watt, your Treasurer, is the right hand man in the patriotic work. (Applause.) It is very peculiar that we were both born in the same town, went to the same school, both retired from business about the same time, and that we now both have the same work. It is a coincidence which I don't suppose would not often happen, for friends to be in touch with one another all these years. And I think as we have grown older our respect for each other has also increased.

As to the quality of the administration; this is personal, every case is a little different from the one before. Everything that is irregular is brought before the Committee which has opportunity and authority to relieve conditions. Certainly I think the quality of the administration cannot be improved, because it is voluntary. No one receives anything for services (applause); it is sustained by business men of this city who give two hours, two, three or four times a week, to review these cases. Not every case is reviewed, because in a normal case the ordinary machinery takes care of it. We have also organized a Ladies' Auxiliary, to follow up families and report upon their conditions from time to time. I think we have got down to a good system, and that one of the advantages of the local administration is that it is giving a free and united service which a paid organization could not give.

It is easy to abuse money; I will touch on that later. The money is on the whole exceptionally well spent. I don't know any case where we pay too much. The minute we get word of any such, naturally we investigate, and if there is anything wrong, it is remedied. There are two kinds of such cases—the incapable woman, and the improvident woman. The incapable woman is not qualified to use money to the best advantage. The improvident woman spends money on what

she does not need. This does not happen usually more than once or twice, for she sees that she has not the money to pay for the things she needs if she spends it unwisely. There are a few cases of abuse of money arising from bad habits of the people, for which we are sorry, but these are too sad to relate, and too personal to make public.

Sometimes it is necessary to separate the children from the family. In such a case we feel that the children must be looked after, come what will of the mother. I can say that the number of such cases is very few, so few that they have no bearing. I can conscientiously say that there are very few thousands of dollars, out of the million we have spent, that have been put to ill use or improvidently spent. (Applause.)

The total cost of salaries for the seventeen months has been \$15,098. The largest salary is \$100 a month, only to one man. So you can see there is not much expense in connection with the Administration. The time of many of the workers is given absolutely free, they are only conscious of doing their duty and feel it is a privilege to do it.

In some cases men have been led up to enlisting by the Fund. Two cases occurred recently. One case was that of a widower, whose wife died a year or so ago; he had three children, the eldest five, the youngest one year old. His paternal instincts and homelike feeling led him to keep that family together, so he went to the country, and found a place near Brockville, with a small house, where he was able to keep those three children under his own care, with the help of kindly neighbors. After the war broke out he seemed to hear the call, but he could not see any way to keep his family together. He was a member of a paternal organization, and went to his lodge about it. His fellow members proposed that he should bring the children to a Home at Oakville. He did so, and went back and enlisted. He came to us to see regarding their financial care, and arrangements were made, everything was settled satisfactorily, and last Saturday morning he came to us to say he received three days' leave to go and say goodbye to those children. I may say the tears rolled down that man's face when he said, "I don't suppose you will think that I will make a brave soldier, but" he said, "it is very hard to part from the children." It is more than you can stand sometimes, but that is the sacrifice some men are making. And I doubt if there is a tear ever comes to the eye of a donor to the Patriotic Fund that is more sincere; it is certainly touching.

There is the other side occasionally. A woman whose husband was in the army wanted to get him out. She said his

daughter too did not want him to go. It was suggested that the only way would be for him to commit some terrible misdemeanor, for which he would be dismissed. "That's the trouble," she said, "he doesn't drink." However she thought of one way, and came to tell how she had put it into effect—she had stolen his false teeth! You see we have the two sides. (Laughter.)

The other morning a very respectable woman came and spoke to me. "You are Mr. Noxon?" "Yes." "Did you send two men to my house last evening? They came and told me you had got on to my past, that you knew all about me, and that my Patriotic money and the Government money would cease. I want to tell you the honest truth about it." I said to her, "Don't tell me anything you don't want to tell." "But I want to," she replied, and he told me the whole thing, and what she related was not very creditable. Her son had said: "I will give you enough money so long as you live respectably. I hope you will do so. Move from the house you are in, and I will help you." I told her: "I am glad your son has taken that stand, and that you are trying to follow his advice. In the first place, we never sent two men to your house. We never send a man at all, it is always a woman who goes to investigate for us. In the second place, we never inquire into the past of dependents up to the hour we receive them. (Applause.) We take these people as we find them, and as long as they do right we will continue to treat them in the same manner. We don't want them to tell us anything more than they wish to about their past."

Another woman came and asked; "Do I look like a woman who drinks?" "No," we answered. "Then why do I not have my money? Why must it be administered by another?" We looked up the case, and found that one condition on which her husband enlisted was that the money should be so taken care of for her, because she did occasionally go on most terrific sprees, and he did not feel like leaving unless her minister and ourselves administered the money for her. It was pretty hard to tell her that she could not have the care of her own money, yet we felt it an obligation we were under to that man to adhere to the condition he had laid down.

Another woman came and asked, "Why didn't I receive my cheque?" From her appearance we could judge that it was for only one reason, that she had changed her address. "Have you moved lately?" we asked. "Yes." "Well, go home and your cheque will follow to-night." I thought I would look up her record, and it was not very good, in fact it was a rather bad report, so bad I could hardly appreciate

it after having seen her. So I did not send the cheque. That brought her in again. "You promised to send my cheque." "Yes," I said, "but I found that your report is very bad," and I named some points. She gave an explanation which seemed, in the absence of anything to contradict it, very reasonable and fair. We are always willing to give people a second chance, so I ordered the cheque to go. Not very long after, in came a report from the Morality Department, with which we work in connection, which was still worse, so the cheque was held. She came in to see what happened. I told her I had given her a chance, but another report came before she had a chance and that till she could settle up with the city authorities we could not let her have the cheque, and even then it was doubtful if we could pay her any more money. So you see sometimes it is very difficult to judge of the character of a case.

The Medical Department.—This help is practical, gratuitous, and continuous. There are two hundred and fifty-six doctors in this city who are doing service for the relatives of men who have enlisted, making three to four hundred free visits a month. (Applause.) Also, the city nurses are making from nine hundred to twelve hundred nursing visits each month. (Applause.) Also, we maintain from fifty to seventy patients in hospitals each month, about one-third being children. Also for all births, nurses and doctors are provided; we look after all funerals and pay all expenses.

Recently there was a case I could repeat—it is worth repeating. A Presbyterian minister called up from the Western Hospital and said: "There is a very sick patient here, one of my congregation, who had lost her baby yesterday, and it is not certain whether she will live. Her man is not on your Fund yet, but is going into it as soon as he goes into camp. But he receives only \$1.85 a day. We told him we would have a nurse sent up? But don't make arrangements for the funeral till we see how it is going to be about the mother." The mother died. The nurse arranged for the funeral, and the minister said afterwards that he had never conducted a more respectable or nicer funeral; the friends were invited to the house, and the man was made to feel that this Association was doing everything that could be done under the sad circumstances. That minister wrote to thank us on behalf of the man for the manner in which that ceremony was carried out. That is part of the way this money is being used.

Another feature besides the department of medical and nursing work is the marriage bureau and the legal department.

We have had the satisfaction of seeing some soldiers married at our instigation; and one particular case which we all know of in our office is a good instance. A young seamstress was living in the city as a wife of a man, and with his aunt. The man enlisted a year ago last September. Last summer this girl came on to our Fund, we recommending the Government to pay a percentage of the man's pay and the separation allowance, under the heading we had made of "unmarried wives." We had decided to send this woman home to England, so she could marry the man there, that she and her child could have a respectable character. Then there came word that the man was wounded and might die. However, later, she received word that he might be invalided home. A few weeks later, he arrived, and the head nurse and myself drove up in carriage to the Convalescent Home, taking with us one of the ministers who is active in this work, and we had them married. The thanks that girl turned and gave to the minister, the nurse and myself, was worth all the work I have been doing in this matter. (Applause.)

Then there is the legal department. In connection with that there is a good deal of difficulty. There is no place where these people can go for information and advice except to us. The men who have conducted their business have gone, and there is no one to go to. So down they come to us with all their difficulties;—matters of second mortgages, relations of landlord and tenant,—and all those difficulties we adjust. We tell them, if there is anything relating to their welfare not to bother; there are men giving their time free. The service is of great advantage to these people. I don't think we appreciate half of what it means. You can understand how when a man goes away the wife feels she is lost; now all she has to do is to come down to us. It is a great advantage. (Applause.)

I could enlarge upon the work we are doing. I can say this, that if the people of this city and county really appreciate what this Fund is doing, and have the liberal spirit in them which I think they have, the \$2,000,000 mark we have set would have to be moved up about \$500,000 to express the people's appreciation. I don't think there is any room in this city for the man who declines or refuses to fulfil the promise we have made. I don't think he belongs to Canada; he belongs to a nation whose national word we can't trust. I also think that Canadians should not have it to say, after this war is over, that it has been the means of us accumulating more money than we had before. (Hear, hear and applause.)

There is no doubt as to our support among the people here, and as to the flavor of loyalty. When the man comes to you to-morrow or the day after for a subscription, please don't measure your gift by what you have done before. I think if I asked those men to stand up who had done all they thought they could, very few would stand. I don't think it is necessary for us to add more to deepen that conviction. We have heard how our men are doing and suffering; I think we have not done greater things than they have. When we stop and think of how heavy our obligations are to those who go, I sincerely trust that when the man comes for your contribution you will be ready to make it just as liberal as possible. As for Mr. Watt and the others in this organization, we will stay with it until it is finished. (Applause.)