

**Ella and Samuel Coffman
with their children in
Vineland, 1920s**

Born in the United States,
Coffman was appointed
bishop of the Ontario
Mennonite Conference in
1903.



Sir Percy Sherwood,
Chief Commissioner of Police,
Ottawa, Ont.

Sir:-

With reference to the report concerning the charge that I made the following statements, "What good are the soldiers. They produce nothing, they earn nothing, they don't earn the cloths they wear, they do nothing but destroy. If any of you are producing food to help win the war, don't do it; If you are producing food to feed the needy, alright, go on."

The purported statements were made on the 14th Ult. in connection with a sermon encouraging our people to continue steadfastly in the non-resistance principles of our faith. Those who were not in sympathy with those doctrines would not understand the meaning of the manner in which the true expression was made. "That soldiers are unproductive of anything as far as their support is concerned, hence in that respect soldiers are a burden but not a creative power in the world." Regarding the second part, my statements were that our people should not be engaged in the raising of food stuffs solely for war purposes, since it is not in the spirit of our doctrine to thus support war, but, that our people should continue to raise their produce for the good of the world in general." It was not in my purpose to speak against the Government, their soldiers or their methods. Our people understood me thus and know that I have never discouraged any of the work of the Government. There are no members of our congregation who were eligible for army service and hence no occasion to discourage recruiting or speak against soldiers as a class.

I am willing to acknowledge that the statements that were made could have been wrongly construed if taken out of their proper connection and away from the general tenor and spirit of the discourse. Otherwise they could not have been thus construed.

My congregation consists of about seventy members and among them there is but one young man in class I and he has made claim for exemption from service on the grounds of being a member of the Mennonite Church.

Respectfully,
S. F. Coffman

S. F. Coffman to Sir Percy Sherwood,
November 7, 1917