

Copy of Letter from Deputy Registrar at London, to  
Local Tribunal, 263, Milverton Ont.

Re. Mennonites.

At London, Nov. 10th, 1917.  
Ont.

Dear Sir:-

I am in receipt of several Mennonite Claims for Exemption with the Post Office Marks as Milverton, and I suppose that it was your Tribunal that sent them in. You should have filled out M. S. A. 25 and marked thereon what disposition you made of these claims.

All these Mennonite people of course, are excepted from the Act, and as long as you are fully satisfied that they are in fact Mennonites you have no option but to grant them exemption. In that case each Claim for exemption should be accompanied with M. S. A. 32 showing your disposition of each Claim, and then your whole day's work, as stated above, should be made out on M. S. A. 25. I return these documents for you to fill out in that manner.

Yours truly,

Signed, W. E. Wismer,

Deputy Registrar under Military Service Act.

Copied by J. R. Ebersole, Dec. 26th 1917.

New Dundee Nov. 12. 1917

Dear Bro, Greeting,

Yours of  
the 8th inst. received  
I agree with you that we  
have indeed reason for  
thankfulness, I also believe  
that we <sup>should</sup> show our gratitude  
not only in words but in  
deeds, at our meeting at  
Kitchener, last week, a brother  
stated that he had three boys  
of military age, and if it  
were necessary, he would not  
hesitate to pay \$300 a piece  
to get them exempted, if  
money were needed to free  
them, you will notice by a  
german sheet that I enclose  
with the "Wichtige Dokument",  
that the Russian Brethren  
in the N.W. have collected and  
paid to the government between  
five and six thousand dollars

and sent it to the Government  
as to show their gratitude for  
receiving complete exemption,  
I believe quite a number of  
our brethren would be willing  
to do something along that  
line if opportunity were offered,  
I also believe that the Amish  
Brethren and perhaps the new  
Mennonites, and the Wise people  
would do their share, My own  
impression is that it would  
perhaps be best if we would  
help to relieve the Belgians  
or the Armenians, but I  
would be willing to do my  
bit in anyway that would  
be thought desirable by the  
brotherhood.

Yours Sincerely

D. Bergay

Preston Nov 12<sup>th</sup>. 1917.

S. F. Coffman

Waveland Ont.

Dear Brother Greeting:— This morning one of our young men was asked to appear before the "Tribunal", I was asked to appear in behalf of him as this was their first case that they had to deal with Mennonites. They wanted to know what our church upheld on that point, and I showed them Article XIV in our Confession of Faith.

Membership Certificate was shown.

They had read a Clause on the Statute Book which was passed in 1873, and 1898, which they claimed referred only to Russian~~ian~~ Mennonites and Doukhabours who came in our country at that time, and that did not include the Mennonites that were in the country before that time.

I read the letters to them that I received from you, but they claim though it may all true it is only second-handed. What they would like to have is something on the Statute Books or something direct from Ottawa, that would include all Mennonites who were here before that time. If you could send me something along that line I would like to have it as soon as possible, and present it to them. They adjourned this particular case for a few days until they should receive

Preston Nov 12<sup>th</sup>. 1917.

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~~needs~~ further information, and then all  
the future cases could be dealt with more readily.

Yours truly

Benj. Shantz

R R # 1.      Prestor

Box 108 New Hamburg Ont  
 Nov 12<sup>th</sup> 1917

S. F. Coffman  
 Vineland  
 Ont.

Dear Bro Coffman  
 Greeting in the Precious name of  
 Jesus your letter received in due  
 time we appreciate your interest  
 shown to the M<sup>h</sup>ish Mennonite  
 Brethren for sending your  
 reply from Government in  
 regard to Military Exemption  
 we are Grateful to God for  
 same hope and Pray that God  
 may Bless<sup>you</sup> abundantly for your  
 efforts we observed Nov 4 as a  
 special day of Prayer as announced  
 by Bro Burkholder we a had  
 a good attendance and good  
 interest was manifested we have  
 had service every Wednesday  
 Evening since our return  
 from The 'Capital' with a  
 good attendance every time

this place

and intend to continue  
 for the time being Bro Osias  
 Bressman was with us on now  
 giving instructions in the English  
 Language to our young Brethren  
 his visit was very much  
 appreciated by young and Old  
 Bro whenever you come our  
 way again dont forget to  
 give us a chance to show  
 you a little Hospitality  
 at our church or at our homes  
 I shall never forget our trip  
 together was glad to have the  
 opportunity of your acquaint-  
 -ence

Health is tolerable with a  
 few exceptions among the Brother  
 hood  
 your Humble Bro  
 Samuel Bender Esq  
 Box 508 New Hamburg Ont



you have been addressing  
to Baden should be addressed  
Box 508 new Hamburg  
Ont

Vineland Ont., Nov. 13. 1917.

George F. C. Payne,  
95 Gledhill Ave., Toronto,

Dear Brother:- Greeting in the name of Jesus.

Your letter of the 12th Inst. received and noted. Glad to learn that you are not having more trouble. There are some of our young men being called who are in the first class and it seems that the Exemption Boards are not aware that the Government has given its decision regarding the Mennonites in Ontario. A number of appeals have been sent in by the various branches of the Church and all have received the uniform information that all Mennonites are Excepted from the operation of the Act. I am enclosing you a copy of the Report of the Deputy Minister of Justice. The original lett is on file with Bro. David Beagy of New Dundee, Ont. who is the Secretary of our Conference.

There has been no regular register kept of the membership at the Toronto Mission. I have a list of the names of the members there which I have kept for my convenience. The congregation there has been changing considerably and being a Mission point it has not been kept in the same manner as other congregations. Since Brother Byler was at the Mission at the time that you were received he might have had a record of those who were received and the exact time. Looking over my correspondence with Brother Byler I find that you and other members of your family were not received until in the year 1912. The date given by Brother Kenagy over the phone on last Sunday was undoubtedly correct since my correspondence shows that it was on or about that Sunday, Mar. 31, 1917, that I came to the City for Communion services and Baptismal services were held at the same time. You have likely received the Certificate sent on Monday Morning. If Brother Kenagy has a record of the Members of the Church in Toronto that he has kept since he left there it might suffice for the purposes of the Exemption Tribunal, but I do not see that such a proof of membership is called for, since different denominations have different methods of keeping the records. The fact that you have a certificate from the Minister and also a certificate from the person who baptised you, should be sufficient. If the evidence is doubted, let the tribunal take the affidavit of witnesses. Brother Kenagy could appear with you to confirm all that is necessary for the proof of your membership. I feel that the Tribunal will hardly be as arbitrary as to reject your evidence because you cannot present a church register.

If your case should be rejected by an Exemption Board at present you would have the right to appeal your case to a higher Tribunal and even a third appeal would be granted, when your case would be considered by the Department of Justice, where it would undoubtedly be considered according to the decision which they have given concerning Mennonites. So you need have no fears along that line. If other Boards exempt Mennonites on the ground of their proving their membership by certificates from their Mennoxitx ministers and Bishops they will also grant yours, since the action of Exemption Boards must be uniform. There will be other cases besides yours in the City of Toronto and in case they insist on forcing our young men and others of non-resistnat faith into the service on the grounds of their not giving the particular kind of evidence they desire, or impossible evidence the cases will necessarily all have to be reheard before a higher tribunal. But, it is my personal opinion that if such evidence as you have at hand is given it will prove sufficient. Make use of the copy of the letter from

the Department of Justice, presenting it with your other evidences in support of your claim. Any other help that we can give you will be gladly given and we need not assure you in this special way that we are praying for you that God may give you the freedom which you ask for from the Government. We are praying also for our rulers as we are told to do in the Scriptures and we believe that God has given us favor with them. Besides this it is our purpose to show our appreciation for this favor in a more practical way than in sending our thanks to the Prime Minister. We have a duty to perform with all others in sharing the burdens that falls upon our nation. Our hearts tell us to do something, and there is plenty to do. There are many sufferers from the war and many that are in need of the very means of livelihood. These are open doors and of such a character that we may well assist in giving aid without in anywise being inconstant with the faith of peace and love and good-will to man which we profess.

I trust that God will be with you and that you may also rejoice in the relief which you may receive, while also feeling in a sense the joy of witnessing with our Blessed Saviour who did so was called to suffer for the sake of the truth which he professed and taught. We must sometimes suffer with Him. And we never suffer without Him, for He is with us and He knows it all.

Wishing you the blessing of God in all your labors and in all of your life, and praying for yourself and family that God may bless you and keep you in love and faith in Him, I am,

Yours in faith and service,

*S. F. Coffman*

Vineland Ont., Nov. 13, 1917.

L. J. Burkholder,  
 Markham, Ont.,  
 Greeting in Jesus name.

Your letter of a few days ago received and noted. I think that it would be in perfect order to send to the Prime Minister an acknowledgement of the favor which has been granted us and those of like faith with us. Today I am going to Rainham to officiate at the marriage of Brother Arthur Hoover and Sister Helen Sternaman. And on the way I will endeavor to prepare an outline of an appropriate address to the Government for the past favors, and also expressing our purpose to show our appreciation in a more substantial way.

With reference to the contribution to the Government of money to be used in sharing a part of the nation's financial burdens I think that it will be in perfect order. We ask for exemption, not that we may be free from any of the Nations' burdens, but that we may be free from violating our consciences. We need to share in the burdens with others of the nation. What we do will be of our free will since the Government has not laid any obligation or duty upon us. This will be in perfect accord with our spirit of Christian service. The line of support which you suggested is, in my opinion the right one. It would be possible for us to help support and care for disabled soldiers. We might not be permitted to give personal care to them without being identified with the army service, but we may support them without violating our faith, since care of them will not in any way support the man power of the army. We may also contribute to the war sufferers relief, in countries that have been devastated and where women and children and others are suffering for the necessaries of life. To give the funds into the hands of the Government would enable them to minister to the needs of such and relieve them from doing so to the extent of our contributions. Our taxes are not sufficient as a share of the burden. Others are giving more and we should not give less. I would not encourage any to subscribe to the present loans, but feel that it may be left to any who have means and want to invest for the sake of investment to do so at their own discretion. What we give we must give with the understanding that it is given for specific purposes. I have talked the matter over with a few and they seem to favor the idea. I talked with Flavius Lehman and he thinks well of the idea and I think that you should see Brother S. Goudie in Stouffville and see what their church would do in the same line. While all might act independently all should act together and for similar objects, and with the same spirit toward the Government. I do not favor the Memorial idea since there will be so many of those institutions that will be standing vacant at some future time. Let our memorial be our life and deeds in the actual time of stress and need. Keep in touch with all of the different non-resistant people on this question. Also the Russian Brethren if possible. What we do should be done systematically, and regular as long as the war lasts or as long as there is need.

Yours in faith,

*S. F. Coffman*

Vineland Ont., Nov. 13, 1917.

Christian Schrag,  
Zurich, Ont.

Dear Brother:- Greeting in the name of Jesus.

Please pardon my neglect in not reporting to you the decision of the Government regarding the exemption of all of the Mennonites from Military Service under the Military Service Act, 1917.

I am enclosing herewith a copy of the letter from the Department of Justice which gives the decision of the Government in regard to the Mennonites in Ontario who made the appeal for Total Exemption. In case any of our young Brethren are called before the Exemption Tribunals they need to present their church certificates, and claim exemption on the ground only that they are Mennonites. It might be well for some of you brethren to go before these Tribunals and show them the copy of the letter from the Government so that they will know that our Brethren have a right to claim their exemption on the grounds of their Church doctrines. Some Boards have already refused to acknowledge the claims because they have not known the Government's decisions. I trust that you will have no difficulty and pray that our privileges may continue and that we may prove our worth to the Government in other ways in which our faith may be shown as sincere and Christian and honorable to the powers that be.

Yours in faith,

*Bro. David Bergin has  
the original of the letter.*

*W. C. Fries  
for the Committee*

Vineland Ont., Nov 13, 1917.

Benj. Shantz,  
Preston Ont., R.R.1.

Dear Brother:- Greeting.

Your letter to hand and noted. There is no doubt but that some Exemption Tribunal have not had instructions from Ottawa regarding the construction placed upon paragraph 7 of the Exceptions to the Military Service Act. This was the question which we brought to the attention of the Government. We know that it had direct reference to the matter of the Russian Mennonites. Our plea was that we are in exactly the same position as the Russian Mennonites with regard to our faith since both they and we hold the identical articles of faith. The report from the Department of Justice dealt with that matter directly and I am enclosing you a copy of the letter from the Deputy Minister of Justice. Brother David Bergy has the original letter and I have written him a card stating that he might make it a point to show the letter to all of the Exemption Tribunal in that district that have to deal with cases of our boys. This should settle the matter. If not, then it will be necessary for them to get definite instructions from Ottawa for their guidance regarding this matter. All branches of the Mennonite church have inquired of the Government regarding this matter of the exemption of Mennonites as been uniform with this which we have received.

A further reference regarding the privileges of Mennonites in Canada may be cited for the benefit of the Tribunal, - A Report of the Committee of the Honourable the Privy Council, appointed by His Excellency the Governor General in Council, on the 25th September, 1912. This states that in part "That under this section you can claim yourself Section 17, of Act 31 Victoria, Chapter 40, all the persons above mentioned, and the Mennonites are expressly included, are absolutely free and exempted by the law of Canada, from Military duty or service, either in time of peace or war."

Trust this will help you. - Yours, S. J. Coffman.

Absolute knowledge have I none,  
 But my Aunt's wash-woman's son,  
 Heard a policeman on his beat,  
 Say to a laborer on the street,  
 That he had a letter just last week  
 Written in the finest Greek,  
 From a Chinese cooly in Timbuctoo,  
 Who said the niggers in Cuba knew  
 Of a colored man in a Texas town  
 Who got it straight from a circus-clown  
 That a man in Clondike heard the news,  
 From a gang of South-American Jews  
 About somebody in Bamboo  
 Who heard a man who claimed he knew  
 Of a swell society female rake  
 Whose mother-in-law will undertake  
 To prove that her husband's sister's niece  
 Has stated in a printed piece  
 That she has a son who has a friend  
 Who knows when the war is going to end.

ALBERT G. ...

# CANADA POST CARD

THE ADDRESS TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE



## JUBILEE OF CONFEDERATION CANADA

	1867	1917
Provinces	4	9
Area (Sq M)	540,000	3,729,665
Population	3,600,000	7,600,000
Railways (Miles)	2,250	35,500
Grains (Bu)	65,000,000	1,000,000,000
Postage Stamps Issued	\$669,000	\$23,000,000
Forestry	34,000,000	175,000,000
Mines	8,000,000	137,000,000
Fisheries	6,000,000	31,000,000
Manufactures	50,000,000	1,300,000,000
Foreign Trade	114,000,000	1,996,000,000

Since 1901 the total value of field crops has risen from \$195,000,000 to \$841,000,000.

The total value of live stock, in same period, from \$268,000,000 to over \$800,000,000

Exportable surplus of agricultural products:—

1868-70— \$13,000,000.

1916-17—\$480,000,000.

*David Bergy,*

*New Dundee,*

*Ont.*



Windsor Ont., Nov 13, 1917

Dear Brother; Meeting. Bro. Ben Shantz writes me that an Exemption Board, to which he was called to assist one of our young men, refuses to acknowledge the Exemption Ordinances of Ontario, without reference to Statutes or definite word from Ottawa. It might be well for all of the Exemption Boards to see the original letter from Ottawa, since they have placed no credence in the report of the letter sent to our different congregations. Can you see to it there. Yours - S. F. Affman.

Petersburg Nov. 16. 1917

L. J. Burkholder  
Markham

Dear Bro. Greeting;

In reply to your letter I may state that we are having some trouble with the exemption tribunals as they will not give us complete exemption as the government granted us. but I think it will come allright in the future. Concerning the aiding of the suffering ones I think there is time yet to talk about that when you come to the Baden Bible conference. I would like to see what they are doing with our young brethren before I give further suggestions

Yours in love

Manasseh Hallman

New Hamburg Nov 19, 1917

W. Giesman

Bro. Coffman Greeting  
in the Worthy Name of our  
Blessed Lord Jesus Christ.  
Since it's not granted to us to be  
exempted from no-combated  
service I hope someone will or all  
of the Church will approach the  
Throne of God that some of the  
leading part of the Church  
will be filled with the Spirit  
of God to give advice regarding  
these letters of Appeals which our  
boys are sending. Have you had  
word from Ottawa about the  
situation as it now is. What would  
you say about having a day of prayer  
on election day and have service at  
as many Churches as possible there  
is no doubt some of our people will  
be asked to vote. I just thought if we  
had prayer service say at one o'clock

this would work both ways it would show the people that <sup>we</sup> wrestle with God at such an important time, next our Brethren would be at Church when the rumabouts might come along.

May we as a body humble us to God at all hours. I sometimes think Thes 4.16-17 is not far distant may we harken diligently to the word so we may be ready to hear the trumpet sound and meet Him in the air. Our Amish Brethren would be ready to call for a day of fast it is time enough if the <sup>in</sup> committee thought so. I am not able to leave home because of sciatic in one leg, hope it will soon come all right again.

Yours in His Service

Osias Gressman

*Not Draft - For Connection. sent to  
addresses of Committee.*

Vineland Ont., November 20, 1917.

To the Right Honourable,  
The Prime Minister of Canada,  
Sir Robert L. Borden,  
House of Parliament,  
Ottawa.

*Not sent  
waiting a  
uniform decision  
re. exemptions  
by Local Jurisdictions*

Honourable Sir:-

In reply to our letter of the 22nd of October, we, the Mennonites of the Ontario and Alberta-Saskatchewan Conferences, and other Congregations of like faith with us, desire to thankfully acknowledge the letter of the 3rd Inst., from the Military Service Branch of the Department of Justice, in which it is stated that "Under paragraph 7 of the Military Service Act, Mennonites are excluded from the operation of the Act and have no duty to perform thereunder."

We cannot adequately express to yourself and to the Government what this interpretation of the regulations of the said Act means to us, nor can we tell of the joy that it gave to our people, nor of the thanksgivings to God which ascended from hearts and homes and assemblies of those who have loved and sought after peace and good will to all men in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and who in sincerity have sought to obey His will and Word in all things.

We desire to express our sympathy with the Government during these days of stress and trials and assure you that our prayers are aded to God in behalf of our Rulers and our King that judgment and discretion may be at all times given them to decide each weighty problem and that wisdom may be granted in every decision that the interests of the kingdom and country may be conserved and the cause of Christ advanced through those gracious provisions of our land which permit the followers of Christ to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

We realize also that the Government has not assigned us any duty in lieu of military service, and therefore we are not made to share any special part of the burden which our nation is bearing. We recognize this fact, and while we are sharing in the national burden of trials and fears and labors, it is our purpose, by the grace of God, to voluntarily undertake some share in the sacrifice of our fellow-citizens, and by some means, \ the plans of which are now under consideration, / express in a more substantial manner our gratitude to the Government for the Christian privileges which we enjoy under the laws of Canada, our allegiance and loyalty to our King and Country, our Christian sympathy toward our fellow-citizens and toward humanity and our common interests in the world in which we live while maintaining our allegiance toward the Kingdom of Heaven and to Jesus Christ our Saviour.

We are,  
Most thankfully and humbly,  
Sir,

Your servants who do humbly pray,

The Committee.

per. S.F. Coffman.

D.J. Barkholder, Mod. Markham.  
David Bergy, Sec. New Dundee.  
Anson Grah, Petrolia.  
S.F. Coffman, Vineland.

Christian Gascho, Baden.  
Jacob R. Bender, Tavistock.  
Jacob S. Bender, Tavistock.  
Samuel Bender, Esq., New Hamburg.

*1st Draft. Correct if necessary.*

Vineland Ont., November 20, 1917.

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The Prime Minister of Canada,  
Sir Robert L. Borden,  
House of Parliament,  
Ottawa.

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We desire to express our sympathy with the Government during these days of stress and trials and assure you that our prayers are made to God in behalf of our Rulers and our King that judgment and discretion may be at all times given them to decide each weighty problem and that wisdom may be granted in every decision that the interests of the Kingdom and country may be conserved and the cause of Christ advanced through those gracious provisions of our land which permit the followers of Christ to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

We realize also that the Government has not assigned us any duty in lieu of military service, and therefore we are not made to share any special part of the burden which our nation is bearing. We recognize this fact, and while we are sharing in the national burden of trials and fears and labors, it is our purpose, by the grace of God, to voluntarily undertake some share in the sacrifice of our fellow-citizens, and by some means, the plans of which are now under consideration, express in a more substantial manner our gratitude to the Government for the Christian privileges which we enjoy under the laws of Canada, our allegiance and loyalty to our King and Country, our Christian sympathy toward our fellow-citizens and toward humanity and our common interests in the world in which we live while maintaining our allegiance toward the Kingdom of Heaven and to Jesus Christ our Saviour.

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Amos Groh, Petrolia.  
S.F. Coffman, Vineland.

Christian Gascho, Baden.  
Jacob R. Bender, Tavistock.  
Jacob S. Bender, Tavistock.  
Samuel Bender, Esq., New Hamburg.

Vineland Ont., Nov 20, 1917.

To the Right Honourable,  
The Prime Minister of Canada,  
Sir Robert L. Borden,  
House of Parliament, Ottawa.

Honourable Sir:-

In reply to our letter of the 22nd of October, we, the Mennonites of the Ontario and Saskatchewan ~~Alberta~~ <sup>and</sup> Conferences, and other Congregations of like faith with us, desire to <sup>most</sup> thankfully acknowledge the letter of the 3rd Inst. from the Military Service Branch of the Department of Justice, in which it is stated that "Under paragraph 7 of the Military Service Act, Mennonites are excluded from the operation of the Act and have no duty to perform thereunder."

We cannot adequately express to yourself and <sup>to</sup> the Government what this interpretation of the regulations of the said Act means to us; nor can we tell of the joy that it gave to our people, nor of the thanksgivings to God which have ascended from hearts and homes and assemblies of those who have loved and sought after peace and good will to all men in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and <sup>why</sup> in sincerity, <sup>have sought</sup> seeking to obey His will and Word.

We desire also to express our sympathies with the Government during these days of stress and trial and assure you that our prayers are made to God in behalf of our Rulers and our King, that judgment and discretion may at all times be given them to decided each weighty problem and that wisdom may be granted in every decision that the interest of the Kingdom and Country may be conserved and the cause of Christ may be advanced through those gracious provisions of our land which permit the followers of Christ to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

We realize, also, that the Government has not assigned us any duty in lieu of military service, and therefore we are not made to share any <sup>special</sup> part of the burden which our nation is bearing. We have recognized this fact, and, while we are sharing in the national burden of trials and fears and labors, ~~we are not required to make the sacrifice that others are required to make.~~ It is our purpose, by the grace of God, to undertake, voluntarily some <sup>of</sup> share in the sacrifices of our fellow citizens, and by <sup>some</sup> ~~some~~ <sup>means</sup> ~~plans~~ which are now under consideration, express in a more substantial manner our gratitude to the Government for the Christian privileges which we enjoy, <sup>under the laws of</sup> our allegiance and loyalty to our King and Country, our Christian sympathy toward our fellow-citizens and toward humanity and our common interests in the world in which we live while maintaining our allegiance toward the Kingdom of Heaven and <sup>to</sup> Jesus Christ, <sup>our Saviour.</sup>

*Withheld by  
decision of  
Committee to  
assist federal  
developments*

Vineland Ont. November 20, 1917.

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The Prime Minister of Canada,  
Sir Robert L. Borden,  
House of Parliament,  
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We desire also to express our sympathy with the Government during these days of stress and trial and assure you that our prayers are made to God in behalf of our Rulers and our King that judgment and discretion may be at all times given them to decide each weighty problem and that wisdom may be granted in every decision that the interests of the kingdom and country may be conserved and the cause of Christ may be advanced through those



gracious provisions of our land which permit the followers of Christ to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

We realize also that the Government has not assigned us any duty in lieu of military service, and therefore we are not made to share any special part of the burden which our nation is bearing. We have recognized this fact, and, while we are sharing in the national burden of trials and fears and labors, it is our purpose, by the grace of God, to undertake voluntarily some share in the sacrifices of our fellow-citizens, and by some means, \the plans of which are now under consideration,/ express in a more substantial manner our gratitude to the Government for the Christian privileges which we enjoy under the laws of Canada, our allegiance and loyalty to our King and Country, our Christian sympathy toward our fellow-citizens and toward humanity and our common interests in the world in which we live while maintaining our allegiance toward the Kingdom of Heaven and to Jesus Christ our Saviour.

We are,

Most thankfully and humbly,

Sir,

Your servants who do humbly pray,

The Committee.

*per. S. F. Coffman.*

L.J. Burkholder, Moderator, Markham Ont. Christian Gascho, Baden Ont.  
David Bergy, Secretary, New Dundee Ont. Jacob S. Bender, Tavistock Ont.  
S.F. Comman, Vineland Ont. Jacob Bender, Tavistock Ont.  
Anson Groh, Petrolia, Ont. Samuel Bender, Esq. New Hamburg Ont

Vineland Ont., Nov. 20, 1917.

To the Right Honourable  
The Prime Minister of Canada,  
Sir Robert L. Borden,  
House of Parliament,  
Ottawa.

Honorable Sir:-

In reply to our letter of the 22nd of October, We, the Mennonites of the Ontario and Alberta- Saskatchewan Conferences, and other Congregations of like faith with us, desire to thankfully acknowledge the letter of the 3rd Inst., from the Military Service Branch of the Department of Justice, in which it is stated that, " Under paragraph 7 of the Military Service Act, Mennonites are excluded from the operation of the Act and have no duty to perform thereunder."

We cannot adequately express to yourself and to the Government what this interpretation of the regulations of the said Act means to us, nor can we tell of the joy that it gave to our people, nor of the thanksgivings to God which have ascended from hearts and homes and assemblies of those who have loved and sought after peace and good will to all men in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and who in sincerity have sought to obey His will and Word in all things.

We desire also to express our sympathy with the Government during these days of stress and trial and assure you that our prayers are made to God in behalf of our Rulers and our King that judgment and discretion may be at all times given them to decide each weighty problem and that wisdom may be granted in every decision that the interests of the kingdom and country may be conserved and the cause of Christ may be advanced through those gracious provisions of our land which permit the followers of Christ to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. special

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Most thankful and humbly, *we are,*

Sir,

Your servants who do humbly pray,

The Committee.

L. J. Burkholder, Moderator,  
Markham Ont.

David Bergy, Secretary,  
New Dundee.

S.F. Coffman,  
Anson Groh,

Christian Gascho, Samuel Bender.

Jacob S. Bender,  
Jacob Bender,

Waterloo Nov. 20<sup>th</sup> 1917

L. J. Burkholder

Markham Ont. Greeting in His name.

Your recent letter dated the 12<sup>th</sup> inst. was received in due time. And since you asked for a prompt reply which I did not give, I ask your forbearance with me. Conditions existing through the Military Service Act have been the cause of not writing sooner. Our young brethren have nearly all been refused complete exemption from military service only from combatant, which is not as the message sent to the meeting held at Kitchener on the through Bro. S. F. Coffman.

Our local tribunals here, state that our plea had been discussed after the Act had been passed by Parliament, and they could not go beyond the Act in giving exemptions, that was from combatant service only.

Quite a number of our brethren sent in an appeal to the Registrar for complete exemption, what will follow we do not yet know.

Would it <sup>not</sup> be well to have one of you brethren who were appointed by the Executive Com. to appear before the Exemption Judge when our <sup>brethren</sup> would be called upon to appear. Bro. Hallman and myself considered it in that way.

For myself I would favor almost any plan that might be considered good to help relieve those that are suffering on account of the war, but I could not give any consent to making a gift to the Government for that purpose. I have been much impressed with the views given in a letter from Bro. Aaron Soucks, which I suppose you received too. May we all with unceasing prayer ask Him to direct through the Word and Spirit that in <sup>this</sup> time of trial we may be true to Him.

Yours in Christian love  
Jonas Snider

All well, hope you & yours  
are the same

been discussed after the fact had been passed by Parliament, and they could not go beyond the fact in giving testimony that was from Combs about service only. Quite a number of our brethren sent in an appeal to the Registrar for complete exemption what will follow me do not yet know. Would it be well to have one of your brethren who were appointed by the Executive Com. to appear before the Exemption Judge when our names would be called upon to appear. Bro. Hollman and myself considered it in that way.

Vineland Ont., Nov 21, 1917.

Oslas Cressman,  
New Hamburg Ont.

Dear Brother:- Greeting in the name of Jesus.

Your letter to hand this noon. I was sorry to learn that some of our young brethren are not allowed complete exemption from all military service by the Exemption Boards with which they have had to deal. There must be a mistake made by the Boards since the statement from the Department of Justice clearly says that Mennonites are excluded from the operation of the Military service Act and have no duty to perform thereunder. I wrote to Brother Bergy one time ago asking him to see all the Exemption Boards in that district and show them the letter from the Department at Ottawa. Each of the Bishops in Waterloo County have a copy of the same letter from the Department of Justice. They should see that the Boards are adequately acquainted with the decision of the Government with regard to all Mennonite Churches. I am writing Brother Manasseh Hallman and the other two Bishops today asking them to see that all of the Exemption Boards before which any of our Brethren are called shall see the copy of the letter from the Department of Justice. Each of the Amish Brethren who were on the Committee to Ottawa have copies of that letter and they too should see that their Boys are looked after and the Boards before which they come are adequately acquainted with the Government's decision. If some of our boys have appealed from the decisions of the Exemption Tribunals, it is certain that their appeals will be honored and they will get complete exemption. Do not worry about this matter. The final court of appeal will be the Department of Justice and that is the Department that has told us that we have no duty to perform. At the same time we should pray earnestly that all others who have trials along this line may be free from oppressions. We need to continually pray for peace. All of our members should know that under no circumstances should they vote at this election.

I hope that you are better from your Rheumatism. We are here in a world of sin and suffering of all kinds. We hope for better things to come. It may be that the whole church will appoint a day of prayer soon.

With love, Yours in faith,

S. J. Cressman

Jonas Snyder,  
Abram Gingerich,  
Mannasseh Hallam,

Vineland Ont., Nov. 21, 1917.

Dear Brethren:- Greeting in the name of our Master.

Word has come to me that not all of our young brethren are getting recognition concerning their faith and are not exempted from non-Combatant service. This is the report from the New Hamburg district. It is said that these young brethren have appealed their cases to a higher tribunal

It may be that some of the tribunals are not made acquainted with the decision of the Department of Justice in regard to all Mennonites being excluded from the operation of the Military Service Act. If there are any Tribunals in our district that have a case or cases of application from any of our brethren to decide it would be well for you to go with those young men and take with you the copy of the letter from the Department of Justice which was mailed to you some time ago, and show the members of those respective Tribunals what the decision of the Government is. They have no right to accept any case of application from a member of the Mennonite Church when such person proves his membership. Mennonites do not come under this Act at all. And in case these Boards do refuse exemption from combatant service only and make the Mennonites appeal to a higher court of Exemption they are altogether beyond their jurisdiction, according to the Department of Justice. They have no right to require a Mennonite to come before their Tribunal much less to decide on their exemption.

In case any of our young men have thus been imposed upon by any of these local Tribunals and they have appealed their cases, there need be no fear that they will be obliged to do any service in the army of any kind. The final court of appeal is the one which has already given expression to the fact that Mennonites are not under this Act.

I trust that there are not many cases that have caused trouble and we pray that we may continue to live in peace and trust in God for His daily grace to be with us in time of trial.

If the Anish brethren are having any trouble I think they also should refer the Exemption Tribunals to the Decision of the Government and ask the members of those tribunals to inquire of the Department of Justice regarding these matters. If they doubt the authenticity of the document which we hold it is due them to ascertain its authenticity and not ourselves. If we have used fraud in trying to get exemption they should prove the fraud and prosecute accordingly. Our letter from the Government will hold good at all times and we may have all confidence in the decision of the highest court in the land.

Let us not forget to continue in prayer and be earnest in our efforts to encourage all to be faithful to their profession. It might be well to see that all congregations are fully informed that all Mennonites are disfranchised at this election. There are no exceptions. Those who vote will lose their exemption privileges. While we cannot vote we may have all power in prayer that God may direct the affairs of the Government according to His will and purpose.

Brother Bergy has the original letter from the Department of Justice. If you need it you may get it from him.

Yours in love and faith and prayer,

S. F. Coffman

Copy of letter, from J.S.Hartzler,  
received Nov 21, 1917. A circular letter.

Believing that the Brotherhood does not realize the seriousness of the present war situation to the extent that it should, considering the thousands of ~~homes~~ fatherless homes, the terrible hardships of the trenches and prison life, the starving condition of millions of people in Europe and Asia, the deteriorating influence of the training camps with their shocking moral and spiritual consequences, the Executive Committee of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference asks the membership of this district to observe December 19, 1917, as a day of fasting, and application and prayer, interceding before God for forgiveness and Divine direction so that these war conditions may not be required to humble us, but that we humble ourselves; that we pray for our brethren in detention camps, who with the best conditions that can be made under the circumstances are after all subject to many severe trials and alluring temptations. Also we pray for the warring nations, and especially for the heads of these Governments that they may, under God, become reconciled to their enemies so that the children of God may devote their time and attention to the furtherance of the cause of Christ and the gathering in of the lost, instead of having it constantly drawn to suffering, bloodshed and death of thousands without Christ whilst we helplessly await the end of this awful carnage. We humbly plead that other Conferences join us in this intercession.

J.K.Bixler, Moderator,  
J.S.Hartzler, Secretary.

Dear Brother:

Will you do what you can to have your Conference, and especially the congregations in your district help in this waiting before the Lord who is able to "Do all that we ask or think?"

95 Gledhill Ave.,  
Toronto, Ont.

Nov. 22nd. 1917.

S.F. Coffman,  
Vineland.

Dear Brother,

Greeting in Jesus name.

Although I shall not be called for Military Service until the second draft, having made my application for exemption on the grounds of our faith, I shall have to appear before the Exemption Tribunal in the course of a few days., and state my case, which is already in the hands of a Military Representative, who has advised me as follows :-

( 1 ) Once my case has been dismissed by the Exemption Board, it will not be heard again, no matter what evidence I may later produce.

( 2 ) A membership certificate is essential but must have the date on which I entered the church.

( 3 ) This in itself will not be enough, I must show the church register to prove that certificate is O. K. the signatures of pastor and bishop are considered not enough proof.

( 4 ) Neither one will be of use without the other.

( 5 ) Unless the above evidence can be produced my case will certainly fall flat.

It matters not what privileges may have been




granted to the Mennonite Church, unless you can give positive proof of the fact that you are a member it will not stand.

If I remember right it was six years ago last spring, since I entered the Mission here.

The slogan under which the board is working is as follows :- " We need the men , not the Exentio  
ns "

Any loop hole given themm will be used to favor their cause.

Yours in Christ,

*Geo. F. C. Payne*  
.....  


Markham, Ont., Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup> 1917

Jonas Snider,

Waterloo, Ont.

My dear brother Greeting,

Your letter of the 20<sup>th</sup> inst. is hand and noted. I am sorry that there is any difficulty in Waterloo Co. in securing exemption. Both at Markham and Stouffville Tribunals every Mennonite who applied had no trouble whatever except - one New Mennonite and he was the first who appeared in Stouffville and apparently the Tribunal officers had not familiarized themselves with their instructions.

There is no doubt but the Government desires to grant full exemption to us. In fact it is clearly stated that "Mennonites are excluded from the operation of the Act and have no duty to perform thereunder".

It must be that either the Tribunals have not been instructed by Ottawa or the applicants have not made clear their position as Mennonites.

The thing for you to do and do it quickly is to report to Bro. Coffman the cases where the Tribunals have not decided in keeping with the assurances which we received from Ottawa. I think you should state clearly the No. of the Tribunal or the name of place at which it sat. Give the name of the applicant

2.

and the no. of his application. Every brother who has been refused his exemption should have appealed to the Registrar for Ontario, Military Service Act, Toronto. This should have been done within three days after the exemption was refused. I see however, in the Globe yesterday, that Sir Robert Borden says the time for appealing is extended.

I think our case is so clear that I anticipate no real difficulty. In case of an appeal it might be well for some one who is fully informed to appear for or with the brother who is appealing until the Appeal Tribunal understood our position.

If there is any thing further that I can help you I will gladly do so.

Yours in Him,  
L. J. Burkholder

Waterloo, Ont., Nov. 23, 1917.

Hon. Arthur Meighen,  
Minister of the Interior,  
Ottawa, Ont.

Dear Mr. Meighen:-

You will remember several weeks ago when I called on you at the Walker House in Toronto, that I referred to the difficulties which those of the Mennonite faith in Waterloo County and different parts of Ontario are being subjected to by the Tribunals which operate in the different districts of Ontario.

I am sure that the object of the Act, as introduced by you in the House of Commons, was to grant exemption from Military Service to these people, but I find that some of the Tribunals in our District, and also near Toronto, and even other parts of Ontario, are trying to split hairs regarding the definition of what is the meaning of the word Mennonite. No one ever intimated to me nor tried to make me believe that a young man whose father was a Mennonite all his life and belonged to the Mennonite Church was not also considered a Mennonite. These people are very conscientious about this matter and claim that a young man who has not as yet become a member of their church is looked upon as an adherent of same. But those of us who know them so well in this district would never think of anything else but to call them Mennonites. This matter has been under debate for some time in this district and is getting to be a rather monotonous subject and I do wish that you would get something definite from the Department that will satisfy these people regarding their status in relation to the Military Service Bill, etc. I, for my part, think it is very unwise to persecute these people who have been considered as amongst the best of our citizens in this district. This is their faith we must give them credit for having conscientious objections regarding war, etc. It is not only in war time that they voiced a protest against war, but this has been their faith ever since they came to this district: and in fact, was the cause in the first place of their leaving Europe, and later on the United States for Canada.

I do hope that you will give this matter your best consideration and relieve the tension in this district, as it is causing a great deal of anxiety and distrust in this community. Something from the Deputy Minister of Justice that will clear the situation thoroughly would be greatly appreciated by all those who belong to the Mennonite faith, and also to those who are their friends in this district, and who would appreciate their worth as citizens. This matter should be attended to at once and Tribunals should be given to understand that when these young men apply for exemption

#2Hon. Arthur Meighen.

although they do not belong to the Mennonite Church as yet, that it is their object and desire later on to be taken into fellowship with that Church, although at the present time we must consider them as adherents only. They do not attend any other Church, they know no other faith but that of their fathers, and therefore I appeal to you to give this matter your immediate consideration, and oblige.

Yours very truly,