

Vineland Ont., December 7, 1917.

To His Honour Chief Justice Duff,
Central Appeal Judge,
Department of Justice,
Military Service Branch,
Ottawa.

Sir, With reference to the action of the Local Exemption Tribunals who have had to deal with the exemption claims of young men who are members of the Mennonite Church and of other Churches of kindred faith, permit me to state that there has not been a uniform consideration of the said claims for total exemption from all military service, which privilege they have had a ^{just} right to claim as a result of the appeal made by a Committee of our Church to the Government and the decision rendered thereupon by the Military Service Council, a copy of the correspondence being herewith enclosed.

In some instances these young men were told that they needed not to have applied for exemption, they being excluded from the operation of the Military Service Act. In other cases their claims were marked "Allowed". Some claims were allowed for other than conscientious reasons. Others were exempted so long as they remain on farms, and still others were exempted from combatant service only.

We have taken the liberty of advising our members not totally exempted or who are exempted for other than religious claims, to appeal from the decisions of the Local Tribunals, this advice being based on the above mentioned decisions of the Military Service Council.

We trust that these appeals may be granted the same favorable consideration as has been granted us by the Military Service Council for which our people have been sincerely grateful. We trust also that any member of our Church who has not understood and has not availed himself of the privilege of appeal will receive equal consideration with those who have appealed for recognition of their faith which prohibits their engaging in any form of military service.

Trusting that Your Honour will give this matter your most gracious consideration, I am,

Respectfully and humbly,
Your servant who doth petition,
On behalf of the Mennonite and Amish Mennonite Committee,

S.F. Coffman.

R.I. Milverton Dec. 12. 1917

Bro. S. S. Coffman

Dear bro.

Greeting in Jesus worthy name
 In regard to exemption on religious grounds
 our tribunals are giving us only exemption
 from combatant service, so we have appealed
 now if our boys are called to the appeal court
 we must have something to show up.
 as much as I know you have been correspond-
 ing with the government and received the
 promise for full exemption. Will you please
 send me a copy of it declared by some com-
 missioner or J. P. to be true? or will you "the
 committee" appeal for the whole church?
 or what is best to do.

An early answer will be much appreciated.
 We are all enjoying our usual health hope
 you enjoy the same blessing

Remember us before the throne of grace is
 my prayer and wish you God riches blessing

Your humble bro
 Peter Boshart

OFFICE OF THE
CENTRAL APPEAL JUDGE

MILITARY SERVICE



CANADA

Ottawa 12th December, 1917.

S. F. Coffman, Esq.,

Vineland, Ont.

Dear Sir:-

Your letter of the 7th Instant addressed to Mr. Justice Duff, Central Appeal Judge, is received. The information contained therein will be fyled, and should any appeals come before this Court it will then be available and will be considered.

Yours truly,

Howebe Doreyal

Clerk to Central Appeal Judge.

Box 67
Elmira, Ont., Dec. 13th, 1917.

Rev. S. F. Coffman,
Vineland, Ont.

Dear Friend:

Greetings.

Through the kindness of a certain friend I have received several copies of the correspondence which has transpired of late between yourself and certain government officials. The subject under discussion in the various letters is of vital importance and I am pleased to take this opportunity in behalf of the Mennonites of this community to thank you for the interest that you have taken in the welfare of the Mennonites in general.

We have reason to be thankful that our faith is being recognized by our government and it is to be hoped that its confidence and favors have not been mis-placed. In order to show our appreciation to the government for the privileges which we enjoy it has been suggested that the Mennonites raise a certain sum of money and present it directly to the government with the earnest appeal that it be utilized for charity purposes only. In order that the minds of the conscientious objectors might be at ease the promise of the Minister of Finance might be secured to the effect that the sum donated would be used only for the purposes intended.

The writer has just returned from a trip to Cayuga and Markham where the proposition was introduced to some of the clergy and was favorably received. In this locality, however, there seems to be a difference in opinion regarding the donation question which has caused it to drift into a different channel and has shaped it into a proposition which will probably win more favor if it can be carried through.

By all appearances the present Military Service Act exempts the Mennonite from combatant service only and he is subject to non-combatant service. While there may be no such papers in the care of the Minister of Justice at Ottawa it is claimed that there are such papers in the possession of the British Government in which the Mennonites were promised exemption from military service in any form a long time ago.

The suggestion has now been made that we make combined efforts to have this promise renewed and that it be recognized by the Crown. And if such promise and recognition can be secured that we, as Mennonites, then would feel justified in donating a large sum of money to the government as a token of our thanks for the privileges which we would thus obtain. It is to be taken for granted that if this pledge would be renewed the Mennonites would be willing to pay a large sum of money which could be used to advantage by the government for other purposes than war.

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While the spirit of bribery may be claimed to exist in this proposition it should be remembered that we are but applying for the privileges which our fore-fathers enjoyed in years of yore and that, while we would be unable to pay for the same if the authorities would be gracious enough to grant them, we might surely make an effort towards showing our gratitude by making an ample donation.

I am forwarding a copy of this letter to other points and am introducing the proposition in person to the different clergies of the Mennonite Church in this community. While we do not happen to know each other in person I trust that our interest in the welfare of our church will be recognized as one and further more hope that you will give this letter due consideration and will answer it as you think proper. I feel confident that the Mennonites of this community will be pleased to co-operate with you should you deem it advisable to proceed with the proposition and personally, I would be willing to accept and act upon any suggestion that you may wish to make.

An early answer will be appreciated and may the Lord through His mercies protect us from the hardships of our sorrowful surroundings even though we do not deserve such blessings.

Yours very truly,

N. M. Bearinger.

P.S. — Just before mailing this letter I have received a letter from Markham from which I understand that the proposition first mentioned in this letter has been adopted at a meeting of the different classes of non-resistants. It seems that immediate steps are to be taken to make a donation and that committees are to be formed for the purpose of doing the necessary business.

Your opinion in this respect and any suggestion will be greatly valued in your reply.

N. M. B.

New Hamburg Dec 13/1917

Bro J. J. Hoffman

Greeting - In the Master's
 Name - My son Joseph has now
 word to appear before the Court of Appeal
 at Kitchener Dec 20. only one more of our
 boys from this community is asked to
 appear on the same day as far as I
 know others I hear are asked to come
 later. I have not seen Bro Hallman yet.
 Joe's letter in ^{handy} this evening, I thought by
 letting you know you might have
 something to offer to place before
 the Tribunal, If you have we
 kindly ask you to forward the same
 if you had any ^{word} from Ottawa which
 I don't know but in either case let
 us hear from you. My health slowly
 improving. Yours In His Name
 Osiias Gressman

I expect to see Bro Hallman
in a day or so.

O C

Your postage will
likely be more than mine

Vineland Ont., December, 14, 1917.

Peter Boshart,
Milverton, Ont. RR.-1.

Dear Brother:- Greeting in the name of Jesus.

Your letter regarding the exemption of the young brethren and their appeals to the higher Tribunals to hand and noted.

Information regarding this matter has been sent out to all of the members of the Committee of Mennonite and Amish Brethren who were in the delegation which went to Ottawa on the 11th of October and had an interview with the Prime Minister and Secretary of State concerning the exemption of Mennonites from all military Service. There has been some communication with the different departments of the Government from time to time since then and the copies have all been received and are now on file with the Secretary of the Committee who is also the Secretary of the Conference, Bro. David Bergy, New Dundee Ont.

Regarding the claims which our boys have to make at the appeal courts may I suggest that their claims which they have made before the Local Tribunals will be considered, and the claim for the appeal will also be considered. In case that these brethren are called before the Appeal courts they would need to present the same claims which they have presented to the Exemption Tribunals and have the proof of their claims, - that is, a certificate of their membership with the Church, and their claim that the confession of faith of the Mennonite Church and her teaching is that none of her members may engage in either combatant or non-combatant military service. A number of our Ministers and Bishops have appeared before the Local Exemption Boards with copies of the statement made by the Deputy Minister of Justice in reply to our letter to the Prime Minister, in which was stated that the Mennonites are excluded from the operation of the Act. None of them seemed inclined to give a more favorable verdict on that account, depending on their instructions and avoiding the claims of Conscientious reasons. I do not know what instructions the Appeal Courts will have regarding these claims of non-resistant churches. They will be governed by directions from head-quarters and it is yet to be determined what decisions they will give. We have asked the Minister and of Justice and the Chief Justice to consider our claims and grant us complete exemption in the appeal courts. A letter received today from the Chief Justice, who is the Central appeal Judge states that the information set him will be filed and used for reference in case an appeal comes to his court. According to that statement, it may be necessary to appeal from the District Appeal Courts to the higher Tribunals until the cases come before the Chief Justice. In that case, there will be no question but that the decision will be in favor of our boys, since the question has been considered in the Military Service Council and there determined that Mennonites are excepted from the Act. I am enclosing you a copy of the letter from the Military Service Council. It is not necessary to have this certified. No one would be guilty of such forgery. If a certified copy is required you can get it from Bro Bergy. Let us pray for our liber. Will be glad to give further aid if possible, Yours in faith, S. F. C. H.

Vineland Ont., Dec. 14, 1917.

Dear Brethren,
L. J. Burkholder,
David Bergy.

A reply from the Office of the Central Appeal Judge to our communication of the 7th Inst. was received.

No statement of any kind is made on the proposition as to whether our brethren will be totally exempted or not. Nothing is said as to the rulings of the lower courts of appeal. It seems that the machinery in operation will not be interfered with by these courts and therefore our brethren will be obliged to wait until their cases come before their respective Appeal Tribunals and they receive their reports. If the reports are unfavorable they will be obliged to appeal to the next higher tribunal until their appeals reach the Central Appeal Judge.

I am enclosing herewith a copy of the letter from the Office of the Central Appeal Judge and forwarding the original letter to the Moderator of our Conference for perusal and thence to the Secretary for filing.

It seems to me that we had better wait until we hear from the Minister of Justice also before we send out letters to all of the members of the Committee. There may be some other matters to be considered until that time.

Yours in faith,

Vineland Ont., Dec. 14, 1917.

N. M. Bearinger,
Elmira, Ont. Box 67.

My Dear Friend and Brother:- Greeting.

Your letter of the 13th Inst. received and noted with interest and pleasure. The interests of the non-resistent churches of our country at the present time are so vitally connected at the present time that we would make every effort of any one or any branch of the faith which makes for the Churches a little more progress toward the solution of the problem which we have on hand, - the recognition of a faith which cannot accept military service in any form. We are glad for the appreciation of what we as a Committee have been able to do and trust that these efforts may still be supplemented by others which will secure our recognition before the Government and retain for us the privileges of entire exemption from military service of any kind either in times of peace or war.

A recent communication on behalf of the Committee to the Department of Justice and also to the Minister of Justice concerning the appeal Cases of those brethren who have not been granted total exemption from military service on conscientious grounds, has had a reply from the Central Appeal Judge stating that the information sent in the letter will be kept on file and used as reference in case any appeal come before that court. No reply as yet has been had from the Minister of Justice. This means that all cases claiming total exemption may require to be appealed until they come before the Central Court of appeal when the final decision of the case will be made. We have no fear but that in the highest court, the Military Service Council will already have determined the meaning of the Military Service Act with reference to "Exemptions" and "Exceptions". The Mennonites are included in the class that is Excepted from the Act, but the Local Tribunals have not so interpreted it. Those of other denominations who have conscientious objections and those churches who forbid "combatant service" are the ones indicated in the "Exemption" clause. Our non-combatant faith or Non-resistent faith is not described in the Exemption clause, and hence the claim which we make is rightly made and can only be met by the conditions provided for under the "Exceptions" paragraph. We believe that the Government in framing the law, had in view the relieving of those who object to all forms of war from any service, but the law has not made the point as clear as it might have been, and hence the trouble that we have been experiencing and will continue to meet with the Exemptions Tribunals. We are praying and laboring for our peace and faithful adherence to the principles of Christ our Head, and Prince of Peace.

Some time ago a letter was framed in which it was our desire to tender to the Prime Minister and to the Government the thanks of the Churches interested for the recognition that was given to us in the report from the Military Service Council through the Deputy Minister of Justice. After it was learned that the Exemption Tribunals were not interpreting the law as had been determined by the said Council and gave no recognition to the letter from the Deputy Minister of Justice, and since there were so many different practises by the Local Boards and many varieties of exemptions even when the Claims of membership of non-resistent churches were presented, it was thought best to withhold the letter until the matter of differences in the

receive equal consideration with those who have applied for the recognition of their faith which prohibits them from engaging in any form of military service

Trusting that this may receive your most gracious consideration, I am,

Your Honour, I am,

Humbly and faithfully, your servant who doth petition.

On behalf of the Mennonite and Anabaptist Mennonite Committee.

A recent communication on behalf of the Committee to the Department of Justice and also to the Minister of Justice concerning the appeal cases of those brethren who have not been granted total exemption from military service on conscientious grounds, has had a reply from the General Appeal Judge stating that the information sent in the letter will be kept on file and such a reference in case any appeal come before the court. He replies that he has had from the Minister of Justice. This means that all cases relating to total exemption may require to be presented until they are before the Central Court of appeal when the final decision of the one will be made. We have no fear that in the highest court, the Military Service Council will already have determined the meaning of the Military Service Act with reference to "exceptions" and "exemptions". The Mennonites are included in the class that is exempted from the Act, but the local tribunals have not so interpreted it. Those of other denominations who have conscientious objections and those churches who forbid conscientious service are the ones indicated in the "exemptions" clause. Our non-objection clause or non-resistant faith is not described in the exemption clause, and hence the claim which we make is rightly made and can only be met by the conditions provided for under the "exceptions" paragraph. We believe that the Government in framing the law, had in view the relieving of those who object to all forms of war from any service, but the law has not made the point as clear as it might have been, and hence the trouble that we have been experiencing and will continue to meet with the exemption tribunals. We are praying and laboring for our peace and faithful adherence to the principles of Christ our Head, and Prince of Peace.

Some time ago a letter was framed in which it was our desire to tender to the Prime Minister and to the Government the thanks of the General Appeal for the recognition that was given to us in the report from the Military Service Council through the Deputy Minister of Justice. After it was learned that the exemption tribunals were not interpreting the law as had been determined by the said Council and gave no recognition to the letter from the Deputy Minister of Justice, and since there were so many dissenting opinions by the local tribunals and many variations of exemptions even when the claims of non-resistance of non-resistant churches were presented, it was thought best so to withhold the letter until the matter of this matter is the

N.M.B.--2.

decisions of the Exemption Tribunals shall have been adjusted. At that time it is the purpose of our Committee to express our appreciation to the Government for the favors shown us and for the benefits enjoyed in the past by those of our faith, under the laws of Canada.

In connection with the letter of thanks we mentioned that we felt that we were not sharing an equal burden with those who were required to serve in a military capacity. No duty was assigned to us above those of our usual ones as citizens of the country. No sacrifice was required to be made since we were free from all service demanded under military regulations. On this account we expressed ourselves as desirous of doing something that would show our interests in our country and our fellowcitizens as well as toward humanity in general. This would necessarily have to be a voluntary service and thus would be in full accord with the christian spirit which we professed and one ~~xxx~~ in which we could engage from the heart. We suggested that plans were in process of formation for such service and our gratitude to the Government could then be manifested in some more substantial manner. Nothing was stated as to what the nature of the service would be, whether a contribution to the Government or to Red Cross work, or war-sufferers at home or in other lands. The question now is, in what direction shall our efforts be extended?

The work of the Red Cross is too nearly associated with the army organization to harmonize with our views of military service. We would not advise personal service in that branch of the army. The Government has made a call for financial assistance and asked for subscriptions for bonds. We ~~is~~ have not advised the loan of money for war purposes, and do not feel that the interest on money loaned for war purposes would be righteous gain. Since the amount called for by the Government has been over-subscribed there does not seem to be an ~~urgent~~ need at present for money for Government purposes. The assistance that could be given to the Government or to any of its public ministrations could be only such that comes in the line of relief for the suffering and helpless. We have considered relief for the permanently disabled soldiers at home. The other object is, the relief of the war-sufferers among the citizen population of those foreign countries in which it is possible for our Government to give material aid. Owing to the attitude which we have taken relative to the war service, there would be some inconsistency in giving money to the Government without qualifying the nature of its use. On the other hand some feel that we should not affiliate too much with the Government in our work of charity.

As to the question of giving to the Government for the favor of our religious liberties, we are supporting the Government as all others do for the privilege of our citizenship. Favors are not on a commercial basis in civilized Governments. It might be construed in another light but we feel that we should take the stand of human and christian justice in dealing with legislative questions. If the Government should require that we pay a specified amount to the Government in lieu of military service we should ~~not~~ feel it our duty to comply with the demand unquestioningly, since the Government would be responsible for the justice or injustice of the act of demand and the use of the funds. There could be no occasion of giving funds to the Government of our own will without a sense of patronage, bribery or unseemly character in the eyes of many people and hence the question of its advisability.

receive equal consideration with those who have appealed for the recognition of their faith which prohibits them from engaging in any form of military service.

Your Honor will give this matter your
Trusting that ~~this may receive your~~ ^{the} most gracious consideration, I am,
~~Your Honor,~~ I am,

Simply and faithfully, your servant who both
petition.

On behalf of the Mennonite and Amish Mennonite
Committee.

The work of the Red Cross is too heavily associated with the army or
organization to harmonize with our views of military service. We would not
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a call for financial assistance and asked for subscriptions for bonds. We
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institutions could be only such as comes in the line of relief for the
suffering and helpless. We have considered relief for the permanently dis-
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among the sixteen million of these foreign countries in which it is
possible for our Government to give material aid. Owing to the attitude
which we have taken relative to the war service, there would be some amount
of money in giving money to the Government without qualifying the nature of
its use. On the other hand we feel that we should not affiliate too much
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unseemly character in the eyes of many people and hence the question of its
advisability.

N.M.B-3.

Our position is peculiar on account of our doctrine of peace and separation from the world. We do not want to be unchristian. There are ways of accomplishing our humanitarian and christian interests and duties outside of Governmental agencies. The church has its agencies in all places, and in many different works of charity. Through these organizations it is possible to do all that we can do. After considering all things it seems to be the opinion of some that our work should be done through the channels of the churches and not through the Government. But if it is felt that something should be done for the Governments sake there might be some compromise arranged. I think that the plan proposed of having a joint meeting of the representatives of all of the churches interested would be of some benefit in having the work arranged uniformly and systematically. Anything that could be done so that all of us could meet and talk over these matters would be advisable some suggestions from all would no doubt help to get the matter on a working basis and steps to further the ends of the churches could be then carried out by parties made responsible for such work.

Thanking you for your personal interest in the cause and also for the brotherly spirit of the brethren whom you represent, and praying that we may fully understand each other, the needs and may co-operate in the great work of ministering to the needs of the suffering world and showing out the Spirit of our Lord in doing good, in saving life and not in destroying, I am,

Yours in faith and service,

S. J. Coffman

Vineland Ont., December 7, 1917.

To the Honourable Charles J. Doheerty,
Minister of Justice,
House of Parliament,

Vinceland Ont. Dec 13, 1917

Oscar Cressman
New Hamburg Ont.

Dear Brother - Greeting.

Your letter received and noted. Also stamps enclosed for which accept thanks. Our last letter to the Central Appeal Judge at Ottawa has been acknowledged, but no opinion has been rendered. The correspondence and information has been placed on file and it will be used for reference for any cases that may come before that Court. No word has been received from the Minister of Justice at Ottawa to whom we sent a similar letter and a copy of all the correspondence with the Government. The situation is this. Let our boys go before the Appeal Tribunals and claim exemption from all Military Service as members of the Mennonite Church who are excluded from the Military Service Act under Paragraph 7 of the Exemptions to the Act, and ~~of~~ claim that position as the opinion rendered by the Military Service Council and refer to the letter from the Government to that effect. The appeal Court may decide upon the case according to the opinion of the Military Service Council. If not, then let there be another appeal until it comes to the Central Appeal Court, when the opinion will undoubtedly be given as that which we already hold. The machinery of the Government make use of it and pray that we may be given our religious liberty. If any other word comes I will let you know at once. Yours in faith

Vineland Ont. Dec. 15, 1917.

Oliver Snyder,
-Elmira Ont., Floradale.

Dear Brother:- Greeting in Jesus' name.

A letter from N.W. Bearinger, of Elmira, R.1, came to me a few days ago regarding the matter of making a contribution to the Government or doing some other work of charity on account of the Mennonites and others of like faith having exemption from military service. He represents himself to be a member of the Mennonite Church and connected with the Woolwich Branch of the Church. His purpose seems to be to see if it is possible for all of the non-resistant churches to co-operate in some such work. Also to get the permanent recognition of the Government for our faith and a Royal assent to the privilege of Exemption from all army service.

Will you kindly let me know if you are acquainted with him and what his connection is with the Church. He says that he has visited and talked over these questions with the Mennonite ministers in that section of the Country. I have written him a reply to his letter, covering most of the points of his letter. He says that he has had copies of the correspondence which we have been sending out to our brethren regarding the correspondence with the Government on the question of Exemption. Let me know particulars. We will be glad to work with the Brethren up there if possible. Yours,

S. F. Coffman.

The Elmira Planing Mill Co, Limited
Successors to
BAUMAN & LETSON

PLANING MILL, and Dealers in
ROUGH LUMBER

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Elmira, Ont., Dec. 18, 1917.

Rev. S. F. Coffman,
Vineland, Ont.

Dear Friend:

Peace in the name of the Redeemer.

Your letter of Dec. 14th was received and read with sincere pleasure. Through such correspondence the good interests of mankind are brought closer together and in doing so may form a foundation which, we hope, will serve the purpose of brightening the light that needs to shine in these sorrowful times.

The donation question was very plainly dealt with in your letter and your opinion has my deepest respect. However, the circumstances under which we are trying to improve the proposition seems to differ and I trust that you will not consider it aggressive on my part if I try to explain the reason why I take such an anxious interest in the matter.

In order that you may understand my position better it is perhaps necessary to make certain explanations. I happen to be in charge of a planing mill business in this town and come in contact with many classes of people. I am a member of that which is known in this locality as the old Mennonite Church and am interested in the welfare of the Mennonites in general. Your letter contained a paragraph referring to the different agencies of the church through which charitable work may be accomplished. It seems that such organizations are not favored by our branch of the church as they do not exist in the way to which you refer.

The Red Cross and Belgian Relief Funds served as an opportunity for us to assist in sharing the burdens of our land but were considered by the majority to be directly united with the rest of the work that upholds the war and therefore such assistance would not be in accordance with our religious belief.

Our attitude concerning assistance in this direction seems to have been respected a fact for which we should have been thankful.

Then the government offered Victory Bonds at $5\frac{1}{2}\%$ interest and the Dominion of Canada for security. A few of our brethren, possibly unintentionally, made the sad mistake of buying bonds and I dare say that it is needless to state the opinion of the people as a result of these transactions. The Mennonites could not give a free donation to the Red Cross or Belgian Relief Funds because of their relation to the war. When a high rate of interest can be obtained on good security advantage is taken of the opportunity and the purpose for which the money is lent is no longer considered.

The Elmira Planing Mill Co, Limited
Successors to
BAUMAN & LETSON
PLANING MILL, and Dealers in
ROUGH LUMBER

1911

Elmira, Ont.,

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S. F. C. (2).

Such, dear friend, is the condition of affairs as they exist in this locality although most of our brethren are not aware of it, and I trust that you may realize one reason why I am so anxious to do everything possible that may serve to give justice to the Mennonite at the hands of his neighbor. For, as the saying goes, "By the black sheep the flock is judged."

And even not considering the above mentioned circumstances I think it would be only fair if we were in some way to make an effort to assist in bearing the country's burden if we can do so in a manner that does not conflict with our religious belief. The Mennonites of this community are considered a prosperous and industrious people and while they are increasing their worldly gains through the high prices brought about by the war they have done nothing in return for the privileges of exemption which they enjoy.

I am in constant touch with Rev. A. B. Gingrich and also with Rev. Jonas Snider on this matter as well as with parties in Markham and Cayuga and will be pleased to be present at any meeting dealing with this important issue if given ample notice of date of same.

May our efforts be pleasing to our Lord and may He sanction His blessings upon them.

Yours very truly,

M. M. Bearinger.

M. N. B. 2

as far as I have learned there have been no steps
 taken as yet toward calling a committee of the different
 churches to consider these questions. Brother POW-HOLDER
 has written me asking to have one member ^{considered}
 to act on the committee as representation of our church. He
 said nothing of any plan to call the committee together. I
 believe Elder Samuel Goudie of the M. B. in C. of Neuffels
 is to call the committee meeting when it is expected to
 do so. You will probably have notice of the time and place
 so that your brethren can arrange to be present.

Thanking you again for your information and
 trusting that we may have the pleasure of meeting and
 working together in the interests of the ^{hope of peace and}
 good will to men, and for the saving of souls, and, finally,
 you the complement and blessing of the season. I am

Yours etc. S. J. C.

Vineland Ont., Dec. 20, 1917.

N. M. Bearinger,
Elmira Ont.

Dear Friend and Brother:- The blessing of the Lord be with you.

Your letter of the 18th Inst. received and noted. I was glad for the information which it contained and the explanations concerning the Church relationship since these are matters of importance as well as of interest in understanding some of the questions which we have under consideration. I was under the impression that you were connected with the Old Mennonite branch of the church, but did not want to assume too much. Thank you for your plain statement of the case. I have always personally entertained a warm feeling of respect and love for the brethren. My wife has an Uncle, Levi Ressler, and cousin, David Ressler, in Indiana who are members of the Church, and one of my most respected Great Uncles, Gabriel Heatwole of Virginia is one of your ministers. I trust that the warmer spirit of friendship and the associations which we must necessarily have in our experiences and testimony for Christ may tend to inspire a greater confidence and more harmonious spirit among us, so that our efforts together may become stronger in attaining our common aims, letting the light of the Gospel of Salvation and Peace shine out to the unsaved and ungodly world to bring men to Christ our Saviour.

Regarding the question of making a contribution to the war sufferers through some established organization presents a peculiar phase with your church. I know that you have no organization for that purpose and understand the sentiment regarding it. But, having an understanding among the different congregations as to who should be responsible in each congregation or district for the collection or forwarding of the funds collected, and then knowing the object for which the funds are contributed would solve the question without the aid of any outside organization. Those congregations which have such organizations could make use of them and each class could then work as it suited them. The principle point for a conference of all the different bodies to consider would be, To what object could all of the non-resistant bodies contribute? What should be the attitude of these churches toward the contribution to Government support? There may be other questions to consider, but it seems to me that the two mentioned are the chief ones. Some of our brethren have invested in Government Bonds, but have not subscribed to the late victory loan. The object with some people is to give the aid to the Government, because it has need of funds and with others it is a matter of getting good interest. Of course the world sees in it the desire to get gain and thus will place the wrong construction upon the best purposes of the christian. It is too true that not all of our members are the most exemplary and we must bear with them and suffer the reproach as well. But it is better for us to use charity and patience and suffer than to discourage and drive away some weak and erring one whom we should try to save. But if it is possible for us to so direct the lives of our brethren that they will do what is wisest in such matters we would be doing the best thing for all.

New Dundee, DEC, 20th 1917.

S. F. Coffman

Dear Bro. Greeting,

Bro. Manasseh Hallman and myself appeared with some of the boys before His Honor, Judge Reade, at Kitchener yesterday, He says that anything brought in outside of the Military Service Act of 1917 is outside of his jurisdiction. and ^etherefore ^{he} has no power to exempt our men from non-combatant service. He also said that he did not believe that Justice Duff, the final Appeal Judge, would give a different decision.

I am enclosing a copy of a letter from the Deputy Minister of Justice which speaks for itself. I believe it was through the efforts of Bro. Isaac Reaman and Elder S. Gowdy that this letter was written .

Yours in faith

D. Bergey.

Vineland Ont., Dec. 22, 1917.

David Berggy, Sec.
New Dundee, Ont.

Dear Brother:- Greeting.

Your letter of the 20th Inst. with enclosed copy of the Stouffville letter re the Exception to the M.S.A. of Mennonites was received last evening. Thanks for the information.

It seems that some of the Judges and others who have the matter of Exemptions on hand do not interpret the Act as do others. And there are differences in the decisions of the same Tribunals. The only recourse that we may have in such cases is to appeal to higher tribunals until the matter is brought to the attention of the final Appeal Court. If the matter of our standing under this Act is to be determined it must be determined through the Central Appeal Court and if that body has already acted or has been instrumental in giving advice through the Department of Justice, then the Judgment will certainly be in our favor. If the Central Appeal Tribunal gives a different verdict than the advices already sent out to various bodies of non-resistant people who have applied for information and instructions, then it will be necessary for us to appeal to the Government or even to the Crown for a ratification of the privileges which we have heretofore enjoyed.

In the cases to which you refer, it would be advisable, I believe, to appeal them to a higher Tribunal. If you do not do so, the members of our Church will be subject to the call of the Government for non-combatant military service. Our claims are legitimate, and it is impossible that the Exceptions granted in so many cases of our brethren in the East and West would again be recalled. We need still to pray that we may "have favor with this man."

Yours in faith,

S. J. Coffman

*Copies of "Timber" Petition and
letter to G. L. Poyer.*

M.S.A.

Vineland Ont., Dec. 22, 1917.

David Berggy, Sec.
New Dundee, Ont.

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Yours in faith,

J. C. Appian

Baden Ont

Dec 25. / 17

D. F. Coffman
Vineland Ont

Dear Brother in the Lord
Greeting in Jesus Name

Received your Letter from
the 20 inst and was glad to ~~hear~~
from you again also for the
programs of your Bible Study

I should have wrote to you
before this time I answering
some of your Letters but being so
busy and not quite well it
was neglected, pray for pardon
will try and do better in the
future as in the past.

Our Boys got along fairly
well before the Tribunals they
were all Grandet Combatant
Service and then we were not
quite satisfied and ^{then} appealed for
full Exemption according

To Newcombe's Statement so they were notified to appear before the Judge at Kitchener last week, and when Bro M. Halman gave the Judge the Letter from Newcombe he said that we have all that we asked for and he had nothing to do with ^{us} he said you are out of the Military Service Act and are Excluded for which ^{we} felt Thankfull to Our Heavenly Father for the promises that he has given us and Revealed upon us so far.

We have Organized a Committee among Our Congregations which I should have told you before but as it is not altogether finished yet I was waiting a little we have not appointed Chairman & Secretary yet on account of Sickness but I think we will meet before long and then have Everything in Shape. The three men who are appointed are Jacob R.

Dec 26

N.P.

Just got word through phone
this morning from vic Wafziger
Moorington that some of
their young Brothers have been
before the appeal Judge
at Listowell and he Refused
their Full Exemption but
I think they have the same
Granted as our young men
around here to I will try
and find out a little
closer about it yet

E.J.

Bender (Tavistock) Ont
 and Christian Schultz of
 Brunner Ont and Myself
 Any Communication might be
 addressed to us, or Either one
 of us I will let you know
 more about it as soon as I
 can, And we will try and meet
 you some other way soon for
 your trouble & kindness that
 you have done for us & our
 young boys if we will not meet
 you in writing we may meet
 you in your Bible School
 at Kitchener. I think I must close
 for today By wishing you the Compliments
 of the Season. Merry Christmas & a very
 Happy New Year. Remember us in your prayer
 we will try and do the same. This leaves
 us none to well the girl Lydia has the grip
 Mother is pethered with Rheumatism and
 I have a little cold ~~spell~~ or grip.
 Now gods Blessing to you and all, From
 Your Loving Brother & Friend Christian Gascho

Dear Brother

S. F. Coffman

Sask

Guernsey, Dec 27 17

Dear Bro. Greetings to you in this
 your numerous ^{branch} letters to hand & must say
 were very much appreciated
 I was thinking you must have
 been kept very busy in corres-
 ponding with the different
 co-workers & districts re
 the war conditions in getting
 out the necessary information
 regarding the exemption.

Well this is a time & period
 in our life time of much
 unrest

11

We have quite a number of
 brethren in the military age
 more than we were aware of.
 Owing to most of them being
 engaged in farm work
 or rather as producers, they
 had very little trouble in
 getting their exemptions.

A few have not yet received
 their wishes. (exemptions) what
 will be ^{the} out come we do not ^{know}.

The tribunals in our district
 were one Merchant, one
 Lawyer, & one returned
 Soldier. The latter ^{two} were
 hard cases.

111

We had a few from Onto
 that had come here for the
 summer & later decided to
 stay. They got busy with their
 church letters. We hope this
 works out for much good
 in the future. so many have
 lived indifferent to their
 eternal welfare.

Truly we are anxious to see
 this great conflict to come
 to an end. Though peace
 talks is the issue of the day
 yet very little is seen as
 yet. May the prayers still
 ascend to the Father who
 over rules all for our good

IV A few of the brethren asked
me about the Tronto-mission.
How it was supported. We have been
sending most of our collections to
the general Treas. G. L. Bender,
and didn't know if Tronto was
receiving from the Gen. Treas
Our people feel them selves
rather under obligations to the
home field.

When convenient drop a few
lines giving information.

By this ^{time} you will be getting
ready for the Bible study at
Witchener.

Love

V

Weather conditions.

We had a very mild November but the December is making up for cold. The last few days it has been as low as 48° below zero. We have been keeping close to the stove & stables. Though we are out to town every second day with milk, we ship to Saskatoon.

Church work is getting along as ever. Quiet this winter as a number are gone east for the winter. Two of our children among the number.

VI

111

With this leaves us well as
usual Hoping you as family
may ^{be} enjoying Gods Richest
Blessing.

Remember us to enquiring ones

Yours Truly

J. S. Rosenbeger

Box 18 Guernsey

Isok

Vineland Ont., Dec. 27, 1917.

Christian Gascho,
Baden, Ont.,

Dear Brother: Greeting.

Your letter received today, and glad to hear from you with regard to the exemptions for your brethren, and also for ours. I had a letter from Brother Bergey stating that he and Brother Halman appeared before the judge at Kitchener and that the Judge stated that he had no power to go beyond the agreement of 1873, \ which referred to the Russings / and that he could not grant more than freedom from Combatant service. This would require that our brethren would be held for non-combatant service. In this case it would be necessary for the brethren to appeal to the Central Exemptions tribunal, at Ottawa and have the case decided by the Military Service Council, or the Chi ef Justice Duff. In that case there would certainly be a correct interpretation of the law and a recognition of the rights that we have enjoyed through the past history of our people in Canada. It may be that the Judge in Kitchener has received some information since Brother Bergey and Brother Halman were in to see him. In the case of the Brethren in Listowel, if the brethren there have not been given complete exemption they should appeal still further so that their claims will be recognized. If some of these cases come before the final Court there will be a general decision made and all will come under that decision. It might be necessary for some of our Committee to appear in Ottawa when some of these cases come up, but the Court there has all of our information and correspondence and will be able to decide without our presence.

I hope that you and your family are improved in health. May God grant you these blessings and much joy in this Christmas season. I will forward the names of your Committee to Brother Burkholder who has charge of calling the special meeting for the war relief work. Yours in faith and love,

A CERTIFIED COPY OF A REPORT OF A COMMITTEE OF THE HONORABLE
THE PRIVY COUNCIL, APPROVED BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL
IN COUNCIL ON THE 25th SEPT. 1872.

The Committee of VCouncil has under consideration a despatch from the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Dated August 34rd ultimo, covering a letter from Mr. Zahrabs, Her Majesty's Consul at Bardiansk, dated July 26th last, and a letter from Mr. Cornelius Janzen, of Berdiansk, dated June, last; addressed to your Excellency.

The Honourable, the Minister of Agriculture, to whom the above despatch and enclosure was referred, reports that it is expedient to give the German Mennonites in Russia the fullest assurance of absolute immunity from military service if they settle in Canada.

That a sub-section, of Section 17, of the Act 21 Victoria, chapter 40, is as follows:

"Any person bearing a certificate from the society of Quakers, Mennonites or Tunkers, or any inhabitant of Canada of any religious denomination, otherwise subject to military duty, but who, from the doctrines of his religion, is averse to bearing arms and refuses personal military service ~~and~~ shall be exempt from such service when balloted in time of peace, or war, upon such conditions as the Governor ^{in Council} ~~General~~ may from time to time, prescribe."

That under this section all 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.

That the intention of the Act in conferring upon the Governor in Council the power of making conditions and regulations was to enable the Government to provide, if necessary, for the registration of the exempted persons in such a manner as to prevent persons belonging to any other denomination than those specified in the section of the Act above quoted from avoiding military duty under false pretences.

That the Constitution does not confer upon the Governor General in Council any power to over-ride or set aside, under any circumstances, the plain meaning of statute law, and he recommends that this explanation be conveyed to the Mennonites in Russia.

The Committee concur in the foregoing report, and advise that a copy of this Minute be transmitted by Your Excellency to the Earl of Kimberly.

Signed, John J. McGee,
Clerk, Privy Council.

To the Honourable
The Minister of the Interior.

Copied from a report from Russian Mennonites, B. Everts, Gretna Man.

Order in Council

EXTRACTS FROM A ~~LETTER~~ from the Minister of Agriculture to the delegates from the Russian Brethren from Russia.

Department of Agriculture.

Immigration Branch.

Ottawa, July 23, 1873.

Gentlemen,

I have the honour under the instructions of the Hon. the Minister of Agriculture, to state to you in reply to your letter of this day's date the following facts relating to advantages offered to settlers, and to the immunities afforded to Mennonites, which are established by the Statute Law of Canada and by orders of His Excellency the Governor General in Council, for the information of German Mennonites having intention to emigrate to Canada via Hamburg.

1. An entire exemption from military service is by law and Order in Council granted to the denomination of Christians called Mennonites.

2-9 Reservation of land and homestead rights.

10. The fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles is by law afforded to the Mennonites, without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever; and the same privilege extends to the education of their children in schools.

11. The privilege of affirming instead of making affidavits is afforded by law.

12- 15. Transportation rates and supplies enroute.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

Signed, John Lowe,

Secretary of the Department of Agriculture.

Messrs. David Klassen,
Jacob Peters,
Heinrich Wiebe,
Cornelius Toews,
Mennonite delegates from Russia.