

Vineland Ont., May 25, 1918.

Jesse R. Martin, Waterloo Ont.

R.R. # 8.

Dear Brother:- Greeting.

I was under the impression that I had mislaid a letter regarding the question of exemption and looking over the letters he I felt that yours was the one. I find no record of an answer.

It is now too late to give any advice concerning the reporting of of your son. I am sorry that the sons of Mennonites are not granted exemption unless they are members of the Church. The matter was taken up with the Government some time ago and is still being agitated, but there has been no favorable decision for them I believe that if the boys would ask to be given some kind of non-combatant service, that the officers would respect their plea on account of the teaching and convictions which they have, but there is no ground upon which to base their religious convictions or their belief unless they are members of the Church.

Mr. Weisler of Waterloo and Mr. Scott of Galt are now at work on the case of adherents of our Church. We may receive some decision a little later on. The Mennonites are now considered exempt and their claims will be honored if they receive notice to report for service. None of the boys nineteen years of age need to report for service. They need to have their Church letters with them to show to the authorities if necessary. All of our people will be obliged to register when the proclamation is made for signing for employment. This does not mean that any will be required to do military duty. Let us continue to pray for our liberty and the liberty of many others.

Asking your forbearance for overlooking this letter, I am,
Yours in faith,

Hagersville May 27th 1868

Dear Brother Greetings ^{in His}
Name

I received your letter today
and was glad to hear from
you

In regard to those having
authority in the Turkard
Church to sign certifications

our general conference gives
Bishop and overseers only.

We have one Bishop for each
organized district, and a
district that is not fully
organized (that is without
a Bishop) the Bishop in

the adjoining district becomes
their overseer
Our ordinary Minister has
no authority to sign those
certificates
I will give you the Names
of all our Bishops in Canada
and their address.

Charles Brocker. Batteaux
ont

John Reichard
Fordwich ont

Peter M. Steckley
Bethesda ont

over

Fred Hahn
Kindersley Sask

John Sider
Marshville ont

For Black Creek district we
had Jonas Winger He was
getting old. We have just
elected Bert Shirk thies
adress is

Stevensville ont

Now if there is anything
that you don't understand
just drop me a line and
I will do my best to explain
it to you

Yours truly
Wellington Duebury
Hogersville ont
R.R. No. 1

New Dundee Ont.

May 27, 1918,

Dear Bro. -

I am here in to
inform you that - himself,
Eld N. H. Schwalbe is
The only one on this field
of labor or in this
Church place that - is
authorised to give a
certificate of membership
to the Mennonite Brethren
in Christ. - I am glad
for your good work in
this matter. May God
bless and help you and
all our people for
himself. Yours Bro. in Him
Eld N. H. Schwalbe

COPY.

TELEGRAM.

This man is exempt.
(Signed) A.C. McCauley, Capt.
D.A.P.M.

33 m bnk 42 paid 9 ex
London Ont. May 27 -1918.

Capt. A. C. Mc Cauley,
Care Chief of Police, Kitchener Ont.

Edward Cober, 726622 A.C. ordered to reprt for duty in error. A.A.G.
notified on May 20. Man is a Tunker exempt from combatant service.

(Signed) W. E. Wismer,
Deputy Registrar, M.S.A. M.D.
No. 1.

\$,40 P.

Markham, May 27th. '18.

Dear brother,

Just a line in a hurry this A.M. Your circular letter to hand, and I note what you say re the Tribunal at Toronto.

Strictly speaking that is hardly exact as the Tribunal under Judge Winchester strongly upheld the view that we are excepted from the Act.

The military authorities represented by Mr Smythe, are making the trouble, and about all our members of the age affected have since then received word from registrar stating that their calls to report for service has been cancelled ~~temporarily~~ for the present pending an appeal before Mr Justice Duff.

One of the M.B.C. brethren who appeared before Winchester last Monday when I was present, received word from registrar on Saturday that his case had been heard at City Hall and that he "was exempted from combatant service on account of religious belief". He came to me for advice and I advised him to pay no attention to it as it was false in every way as Winchester positively told each one before him that he was excepted from the Act.

Would advise you to see that someone keeps watch on matters at Ottawa for us for one cannot tell what influences are at work.

Last evening five were received into membership at this place as follows.

Grove

Mr and Mrs John Wideman, their son Leslie and Louis Gaxe and Edwin Jewett.

Last three named are between 18 and 34.

With best wishes, as ever,

Fraternally,

J.L.B.

Department of Justice,

Ottawa Ont., May 27, 1918

The Asst. Postmaster,
Farnstock Ont.

Dear Sir, answering your letter of the 27th inst.

Re Mennonites. I may say that Mennonites have to register under the Act as well as all others. They are only exempt from Consular Service and may be called for duty in railway construction and Forestry battalions.

Yours Very Truly,

W. E. Maslin.

Dept Reg. —

Per

Vineland Ont., May 27th, 1918.

Hon. F. S. Scott, M. P.
Galt, Ont.

Dear Sir:

With reference to the case of the Tunker Brethren, information has come to me that one, or both of the young men from Parry Station Ontario, are now imprisoned in the barracks at the Exhibition camp in Toronto. They are Earl M. Sider and William Charlton.

Earl M. Sider was accompanied to Toronto by his father when he was informed that the Tunker brethren were not exempted and that he would be required to report. He paid his own fare to the camp, not making use of the money that was sent to him for transportation. The father is also a minister of the Tunker Church, and his claims for exemption of his son were not regarded, and the boy was taken into the camp and assigned to his quarters. After remaining there a day and a half, he was asked to put on the uniform, and, on account of his faith, he could not do so. He was then placed under arrest and imprisoned.

I have learned that when the father appeared before the Military Representative of the District of Toronto, and made claims for the exemption of his son, that language unbecoming to the occasion and insulting remarks were made. And, I have been informed that the same kind treatment and language has been commonly used in that department when our brethren and the Tunkers have appeared to make claims for exemption. Were these claims not based on principles were were held as a sacred obligation to God, one might overlook such remarks, but it is embarrassing to gentlemanly and christian sentiments to meet with such treatment from those who are to represent our Government. This statement is made simply to show that to require our people to report to the military authorities does not cause them to change their faith and subjects them to indignities which we know that our Government does not warrant.

We have had no further complaints regarding the imprisonment of the Mennonite and Amish brethren. We trust that the steps that have been taken to relieve the past conditions may be guaranteed to us for the future, under whatever conditions the Government may call for further reinforcements for the C. E. F.

Thanking you for your interest and support of our cause, I am,

Gratefully and truly Yours,

For the Committee.

S. F. Hoffman.
Vineland
Ont.

Kindersley May 25th 1917

Dear Bro. -

Received your letter this evening and felt to thank the Lord for the way things were working for the benefit of the boys in question in the Military Service Act. We have visited A. L. Farning Regina last winter and he also informed us that we only could claim exemptions from ~~combatant~~ combatant service, and that we would have to perform non combatant service.

We have 25 members under my charge who would come under the age of 18. to 34.

I have issued certificates to all under the Service call but they have not had much effect as yet in helping the boys.

Your letter gave me much encouragement and we will join together in prayer that the Lord may still undertake

I will inform the congregation as soon as possible about this information.

I appreciate very much your interest in us at this time and may God give special wisdom to you who are at the head of the committee.

Wishing you the Lords very best. I Remain.

Yours. in Jesus.

Bishop J. O. Naha
Kindersley
 Sask.



House of Commons

~~OTTAWA~~ Galt, May 28th, 1918.

Rev. S. F. Coffman,

Vineland, Ont.

Dear Mr. Coffman :-

I have your letter of the 27th instant and note what you say regarding the Tunker brethren being imprisoned at the Barracks at Exhibition Camp, Toronto. I will bring their case to the attention of the Department. I trust that you will have no further difficulty with the members of your church being called up for military service.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

F. S. Galt.

Copy

Ephraim Weber - Elmira
Samuel Ford - St Jacobs

Vineland Ont., May 28, 1918.

Dear Brother :- Greeting.

Regarding the registering for military service of our young brethren, it will be best for them not to register. The Government understands that our young men have been instructed that they need not register. The Officers Commanding in each of the Military Districts will be instructed to honor the Church certificates which our Bishops sign and will grant exemption in case any of our boys are arrested for not complying with the Order in Council calling these young men to service.

It is also understood that these boys will not be called to service. Some of the names of these boys have been sent in to the District Registrar, but not all. It will be necessary for our boys to refuse at some time. If they register they will be liable to be called. If called they will have to report and then refuse to serve. None of our boys should register for service, because they do not expect to serve. You will understand the position of our Church and we are only instructing our boys to conform to these principles. The Government knows our stand and our purpose not to register and has agreed that our plan is all right.

The special notice that is sent out through the Post Office is intended for the people in general. We have a different understanding with the Government and they have made special arrangements for us. Give these instructions to any of the boys and their parents who may be anxious about the matter of registering.

Yours in faith,

Vineland Ont., May 28, 1917.

J. L. Byer,
Markham Ont.,

Dear Brother:- Greeting.

Your letters have been received and much appreciated. I am sure that the whole situation is such that we need to keep in as close touch with it as possible. Mr. Scott has been looking after the matter for us while there, but since Parliament has been prorogued, he is at home in Galt. He has written me that he will attend to our affairs for us from there and desires that we keep him informed concerning the situation here. I have been keeping the information on the way. Here is a copy of his last letter to me from Ottawa. May 23rd, 1916.

" Dear Mr. Coffman, I have your telegram of the 22nd instant advising me that two Amish Members are under arrest in London. I am sure that the arrangements which I made with the Department have not yet been put into operation, in fact, it was only yesterday that the Department received the list which you sent me. I have today taken up with the department the case of the arrest of those two young men and they have promised to arrange for their release and no doubt it will go into effect in a day or two. Just as soon as arrangements have been completed with the District Commanding Officers, I do not anticipate that they will have any further trouble in this regard. I expect to leave for home on Friday and if there is anything further that presents itself after this week. If you will address me at Galt, Ont., I will see that it is attended to.

I am, Yours very truly, Signed, F.S.Scott."

I believe that the Government is sincere in their desire to grant us the privilege of continuing our faith and recognizes that our faith is right, but there is so much opposition on account of the other Churches and their practices which are the opposite of our in regard to the participation in the war that it is hard for the Government to do anything for us without incurring the displeasure of others, and, inviting a more severe persecution of our faith if their decisions in our favor are too publically declared.

I believe that Mr. Scott, and Mr. Welchel, Ex M.P. of Waterloo, will keep in touch with affairs in Ottawa. They have their interests in their constituencies, which you know are strongly of our faith, at least in some sections, and they will be kept in touch with the questions in which we are concerned.

Another matter that should concern us is that the District Registrars and Commanding Officers of Districts, have no authority to decide cases except as directed by Ottawa, and that our relations are determined by Ottawa. If any decisions in the Military Districts are not in accord with our arrangements with the Government we have a right to appeal for the correct regulations. Thank you for your assistance. Will be glad for any information or advice. Yours,

S. F. Coffman

Copy

*Samuel Good - H. Jacobs
Ephraim Weber - Elmer*

Vineland Ont., May 28, 1918.

Dear Brother :- Greeting.

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It is also understood that these boys will not be called to service. Some of the names of these boys have been sent in to the District Registrar, but not all. It will be necessary for our boys to refuse at some time. If they register they will be liable to be called. If called they will have to report and then refuse to serve. None of our boys should register for service, because they do not expect to serve. You will understand the position of our Church and we are only instructing our boys to conform to these principles. The Government knows our stand and our purpose not to register and has agreed that our plan is all right.

The special notice that is sent out through the Post Office is intended for the people on general. We have a different understanding with the Government and they have made special arrangements for us. Give these instructions to any of the boys and their parents who may be anxious about the matter of registering.

Yours in faith,

Copy of Unguivul.

Vineland Ont., May 28, 1918.

Hon. F. S. Scott, M. P.
Galt Ont.

Dear Sir:

The following is a revised list of the names of those who are authorized in the Tunker Church to sign certificates of membership.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Bishop Charles Baker, | Batteaux, Ont. |
| Bishop Fred Hahn, | Kindersley, Sask. |
| Bishop John Reichard, | Fordwich, Ont. |
| Bishop John Sider, | Marshville, Ont. |
| Bishop Peter M. Steckley, | Bethesda, Ont. |
| Bishop Bert Sherk, | Stevensville, Ont. |

I am forwarding you also a copy of the minutes of the Conference of the Tunker Church, with the list of the names of bishops and ministers, with the names of the authorized bishops underscored.

Their Constitution and By-laws include a discipline and states their standing on "Non-resistance, in an article on page 77.

I trust that the Government will see fit to grant them total exemption from military service.

There have been no recent reports of any of our brethren having been placed under arrest, but some who have been imprisoned have thus far not been released, or have been exempted very recently.

Yours truly,

For the Committee.

Hesston Kans May 29 1918

Sr Coffman

Dear Bro Greeting in Jesus worthy name
 'Tis true I never met you in person yet I
 had a good deal about you and see your
 name in the Herald you may wonder why I
 am writing you But as I was I'm about
 this spring and liked the country quite well
 and bought a farm there now while this terrible
 war is on I don't hardly know what to do about
 moving there and I was told you could give
 me the facts about the Exemptions & prolegations
 if a man from the States should move
 there since the war is on would he be Exempted
 from military service if one has bin
 convicted since war was declared will he
 be Exempted what is the question in just
 by our people what do they with such that
 will not Exempt service and you please
 give me all the other information you can
 and I would be very much obliged

from J L Schellenberg

Hesston

Kans

Cooper

Ottawa May 29, 1918

Mr. M. C. Bowman
Cleveland, West.

Dear Mr. Bowman:

I am writing this from Ottawa, as I came down a day earlier than I at first intended.

I took up the case of the Mennonites with regard to exemption at the Military Department. There is a conflict of opinion among the legal military authorities in that Department as to the status of the Ontario Mennonites under the military service act, one authority holding that they must report and then obtain leave of absence upon presenting a certificate of membership from a Bishop, while the other holds that Ontario Mennonites as well as the Manitoba Mennonites are entirely outside of the operation of the M.S.A.

I was ordered then to clear the matter up, I had a personal interview with the Minister of Justice. He expressed himself as unable to give a decision without careful thought, and I left him after making an appointment with him for a later date in the day, when he hoped to have something more definite for me. I shall see him in about an hour and shall offer his opinion to this letter.

As to what is best for your young men to do, it is difficult to judge. If they register, they will have to report later and put in an application for leave of absence, which will be granted on the score of conscientious objection if they present certificates of membership from their Bishop. Said membership must date from not later than July 6, 1917 when the act came into force.

If they do not register, they must be sure to carry with them certificates of membership, which will serve as a protection against officers regarding up defaulters, but I am not sure I could prove a complete protection, unless the Department makes a definite ruling on the interpretation of the act. I asked them to make a ruling but they say that only a test case in court could do that. I then suggested to the Minister that the Government should the law so as to make it absolutely clear that Mennonites were outside of the scope of the act. The Minister appeared to view the suggestion favorably and asked me to write a letter to that effect. I have done so, and enclose a copy hereunto for your information, which kindly return to me at Kitchener. I shall return to Kitchener to-morrow and shall be glad to talk the matter over with you if you desire.

Yours truly W. D. Cooper

Later:

I again saw the Minister of Justice; He says that in his opinion all Mennonites in Canada are outside the operation of the Military Service Act. But he raises another point. It appears the Military Service Council has just made a report to him, stating they could find no conclusive ground upon which a ruling could be made as to what constitutes a Mennonite. I suggested that purely a Bishop's Certificate should suffice, but he wouldn't accept that as complete proof. He promised to make fuller investigation immediately, in order to make a definite ruling. I pointed out that the day of registration (June) was close at hand and that the young men should know.

In the meantime, he points out that if the young men do not register, they may be all right, but on the other hand might be arrested and the onus placed on them to prove in court that they are Mennonites.

He further suggests that they might register, stating also that they were Mennonites and claiming the benefit of the excepting clause in the Act. Thus they would not prejudice any rights they have under the Act. Of course they would have to report at Military Headquarters should they be called, I suppose, and their claim of Bishop's certificate which is recognized for purposes of leave of absence. The Minister of Militia assured me last week that conscientious objectors are not required for service of any kind.

I regret that this is the best I could do. ~~The~~ The authorities are making the matter more difficult and complicated than seems necessary, and you will after all, have to use your own best judgment.

Sincerely Yours.

(signed) W. D. Euler.

Kitchener, Ont., May 29, 1918

The Hon. The Minister of Justice,
Ottawa, Canada.

Dear Sir:

Considerable uncertainty exists with regard to the status of the Mennonites and other conscientious objectors under the Military Service Act. Many of these conscientious objectors reside in ^{North} Waterloo, the riding I have the honor to represent, and I have been endeavoring to have their status made clear.

Legal officers of the Department of Militia have given opposing views on the matter, one officer, Col. Biggar, holding that the Ontario Mennonites do not come under the Order-in-Council which places the Mennonites and Doukhobors in ^{exemption} ~~exemption~~ outside the scope of the Act altogether, while Col. Mochin is of the opinion that all Mennonites etc., no matter where found, are included under the Order-in-Council. If the first view is correct, it would necessitate that the Mennonites register and then obtain leave of absence as conscientious objectors. If the second view is correct, they would not be required to register, I presume, but would prove themselves outside the operation of the Act by exhibiting certificates of membership from the heads of their Churches.

May I suggest that there seems to be no good reason why any distinction should be made among the various classes of Mennonites and other bona-fide conscientious objectors, especially in view of the fact that the Ontario Mennonites (located largely in Waterloo County) claim that they have a treaty with the Government of this ~~country~~ ^{Province}, for total exemption from military service, when they settled in Canada about one hundred years ago. In any case, it is recognized that the bona-fide conscientious objectors should not be called for military services and therefore, it seems to me advisable to simplify the matter as much as possible. Thus, if any legal doubt exists under the Act as now constituted, I would suggest that the Government could remove all uncertainty by amending Order-in-Council which would place all Mennonites and other objecting sects outside the operation of the Act. Thus the possession of a membership certificate in said Churches, signed by a Bishop or other ecclesiastical head, would be all the protection necessary, instead of the difficulty some of these people are now having. The effect would be the same, and much unnecessary trouble avoided.

Yours Truly,

Signed W. A. Euler.

COPY.

The Honourable Minister of Justice,
Ottawa Canada.

Kitchener Ont. May 29th 1918.

Dear Sir:-

Considerable uncertainty exists with regard to the status of mennonites and other conscientious objectors under the Military Service Act. Many of these conscientious objectors under the Military Service reside in North Waterloo, the riding I have the honour to represent, and I have been endeavoring to have their status made clear.

Legal Officers of the Department of Militia have given opposing views of the matter. One officer, Col. Biggar, holding that the Ontario Mennonites do not come under the Order in Council, which places the Mennonites and Doukhobors in Manitoba outside the scope of the Act altogether, while Col Machin is of the opinion that all Mennonites etc., no matter where found, are included under the Order in Council. If the second view is correct they would not be required to register, I presume, but would prove themselves outside the operation of the Act by exhibiting certificates of membership from the heads of the church.

May I suggest that there seems to be no good reason why any distinction should be made among the various classes of Mennonites and others bona fide conscientious objectors, especially in view of the fact that the Ontario Mennonites, located largely in Waterloo county, claim that they had a treaty with the Government of that time, for the total exemption from Military service when they settled in Canada about one-hundred years ago. In any case, it is recognized that the bona fide conscientious objectors should not be called for military service and therefore it seems to me advisable to simplify the matter as much as possible. Thus, if any legal doubt exists under the Act as now constituted, I would suggest that the Government remove all uncertainty by amending Order in Council which would place all Mennonites and other objecting sects outside the operation of the Act. Thus the possession of a membership certificate in said churches, signed by a Bishop or other ecclesiastical head, would be all the protection necessary, instead of the difficulty some of these people are now having. The effect would be the same and much unnecessary trouble avoided.

Yours truly,

(Signed) W.A. Euler.

STATEMENT CONCERNING NON-RESISTANT PEOPLE IN CANADA.

1. The faith of the Non-Resistant people was in existence for many years, but was first printed in the form of a Confession of Faith in 1527 among the people of Holland and Flanders.
2. The Mennonites in Holland were persecuted with all reformers and independent religious bodies until the granting of religious liberty by William, 1571-83. Military exemption was especially granted them in 1626, and continued with modified conditions from that date.
3. In Switzerland the Mennonites and Anish Mennonites suffered extreme persecutions as reformers with other bodies, but especially on account of their non-resistant belief and practice for which they were banished, sold as gally slaves, property confiscated and citizenship denied. A special appeal from the States General of Holland secured for them some relief. About the middle of the Eighteenth century they were granted toleration.
4. The religious Treaty of Westphalia, 1648, securing religious liberty in Europe, did not stop the persecution of the non-resistant people.
5. Moravia afforded temporary asylum for the non-resistant people from Western Europe, but later became intolerant owing to the article of faith which prohibited the taking up of arms in those turbulent times.
6. Alsace, Lorraine and the districts of the Rhine afforded some degree of relief from persecutions at times, and again became extremely intolerant. During the eighteenth century and earlier these people who believed that the bearing of arms was unscriptural were particularly persecuted on account of that belief. They suffered special taxation, confiscation of property, restriction of worship, and banishment. Holland and America afforded them asylum during these times. A special visit from William Penn was welcome to them.
7. As early as 1710 Prussia invited these people to settle in that country. They promised them religious liberty. Not until 1773 were they granted freedom from military service, educational privileges, property and business rights. With a change of conditions and of rulers these privileges were annulled and the invitation to Russia induced most of them to migrate, but even this privilege was denied them.
8. Catharine of Russia invited the Mennonites to settle in her southern provinces, in 1766. This invitation was accepted by those living in Prussia owing to the greater freedom from military service granted. These privileges were discontinued by Alexander II, 1870-74. He limited their military duties to service in hospitals, railways and forestry, which, on account of their relation to military service were distasteful to these people whose interpretation of their faith forbid all alliance with military duties. This denial of their privileges resulted in their migration to Canada and the United States.
9. William Penn and his agents visited the Mennonites, Anish and Tunkers of Holland and the Rhine provinces inviting them to settle in his colony in America. The first of these settlers came to America in 1683. They were granted complete exemption from military service, permitted to hold property, conduct their own schools, hold religious services and were given the rights of citizenship.

Copy of Original.

10. In the United States, during the war of the Revolution and the war of the Rebellion, the Mennonites, Amish and Tunkers held steadfastly to their faith and bore the penalties which, in some cases, were laid upon them, and were grateful for the tolerance which the Government was pleased to afford them when their faith and practice was understood.
11. The first Mennonite settlement in Canada was made in 1786 in Lincoln County Ontario. The settlement in Waterloo County was begun in 1800. The settlement in York County was made in 1803. Along with these people came the Amish and the Tunker brethren at different dates.
12. The privileges of the faith of the Quakers, Mennonites and Tunkers have been legally recognized by the Government of Canada since the year 1898, excepting by an Act of 1846 which was repealed in 1849. The payment of a special exemption tax was obligatory until the year 1855. Since the latter date total exemption from Military Service has been continuously granted until 1917, a time of war.
13. The Russian Mennonites came into Canada in 1873, under a special Order-in-Council granting Military Exemption, special school privileges and full citizenship. Their military exemption was based on the existing statutes regarding exemption for conscientious reasons.
14. The Mennonites of America have always been supporters of the Public Schools, in United States and in Canada. They have a few advanced Schools and Colleges, all of which are supported solely by the Church and are located in the United States. The Russian Mennonites have among them their private Schools. They have no "Separate Schools" among them. Many congregations of the Russian Mennonites support and attend the Public Schools. Many of their private schools are conducted according to Government standards.
15. The Russian Mennonites have two Advanced Schools in the West, in which all of the standard branches are taught in the English language, preparatory to fitting teachers for their private schools and to maintain them according to Government Standards. Some of the Congregations oppose the teaching of English purely from religious motives, since their religious literature is entirely in the German language.
16. While some of the Ontario congregations maintain their worship in the German language it is due to the fact that their religious education and literature is in that language. They have no schools in which they give instructions in that language.
17. The people in Canada who are of the non-resistant faith have responded to appeals for the relief of suffering and are continuing their support of relief and reconstruction in the devastated districts of Europe and Asia. They are highly appreciative of the past and present attitude of the Government of Canada toward them and are loyal to the land that has been generous to every phase of the Christian Faith.

COPY.

Letter from W.D.Euler to
M.C.Bowman.

Ottawa, May, 29, 1918.

Mr. M. C. Bowman,
Vineland Ont.

Dear Mr. Bowman,

I am writing this from Ottawa, as I came down a day earlier than I at first intended.

I took up the case of the Mennonites with regard to Exemption at the Military Department. There is a conflict of opinion among the legal Military Authorities in the Department as to the status of the Ontario Mennonites under the Military Service Act, one authority holding that they must report and then obtain leave of absence upon presenting a certificate of membership from a bishop, while the other holds that Ontario Mennonites as well as the Manitoba Mennonites are entirely outside of the operation of the Military Service Act.

In order then to clear the matter up, I had a personal interview with the Minister of Justice. He expressed himself as unable to give a decision without careful study, and I left him after making an appointment with him for later in the day, when he hoped to have something more definite for me. I shall see him in about an hour and shall append his opinion to his letter.

As to what is best for your young men to do, it is difficult to judge. If they register, they will have to report later and put in an application for leave of absence, which will be granted on the score of conscientious objection, if they present certificates of membership from the bishop. Said membership must date from not later than July 6, 1917, when the Act came into force.

If they do not register they must be sure to carry with them a certificate of membership which will serve as a protection against officers rounding up defaulters, but I am not sure it would prove a complete protection, unless the Department makes a definite ruling in the interpretation of the Act. I asked them to make a ruling, but they say that only a test case in court could do that. I then suggested to the Minister that the Government amend the law so as to make it absolutely clear that the Mennonites were outside of the scope of the Act. The Minister appeared to view the suggestion favorably and asked me to write a letter to that effect. I have done so, and enclose a copy herewith for your information, which kindly return to me at Kitchener. I shall return to Kitchener tomorrow and shall be glad to talk the matter over with you if you desire.

Yours truly,

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COPY.-- W.D.E. to M.C.B.--Cont.

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I regret that this is the best I could do. The authorities are ~~work~~ making the matter more difficult and complicated than seems necessary, and you will after all, have to use your best judgment.

Sincerely Yours,

Signed, W. D. Euler.

Gormley, May 29 th, 1918

Dear Brethern.

Greeting

According to arrangements, a number of of the members of our church met W. R. Smythe, K. C. in Toronto on Monday last. Our delegation was composed of Three of our Bishops, Three Elders, and Two lay-members.

We are pleased to report that Mr Smythe received us very kindly, and gave us a very very courteous and considerate hearing. The first matter under consideration was, the establishment of our body as an established, and fully organized religious body known as "Tunkers" We were able to establish this fact beyond a doubt, and Mr Smythe was fully satisfied on this point.

The next was to establish our claims for exemption on religious grounds, as provided in the statutes of Canada, this Mr Smythe also fully recognized up to the limit of "Combatant service only" admitting however that we, together with all the Mennonite bodies, other than that of the "Russian Mennonites" were entitled to the same consideration as was accorded them in 1873, but Mr Smythe held firmly that the Order in Council of 1873, was a special bargain, or contract on the part of the Government of Canada, with the Russian Mennonites, excepting them from any form of military service which up to that had not been granted to any of the three bodies mentioned in any of the Acts previously passed for the benefit of these bodies. Mr Smythe further held that the Act of 1906, is the only Act under which The Quakers, Mennonites, and Tunkers, may claim exemption, and that from "Combatant Service only". Contending as he did that the only reference made in the Military Service Act of 1917, relative to exemption for the three bodies named, was based on the Act of 1906, and that none of these three bodies had any recognition under the "EXCEPTIONS" paragraph 7 of that Act, nor does the Order in Council of May 20 th 1918 take any recognition of these bodies other than that provided in the 1906 Act. And while he adhered strictly to the provisions of the various Acts, yet Mr Smythe appeared to be in sympathy with us, and assured us that we could depend that the whole situation should be thoroughly investigated, and he further assured that we, (Mennonites, and Tunkers) would have a "Square deal", and even thanked us for placing our cause before him in the manner we did. Now this places us, Especially our "Mennonite Brethern" in a different position, and less favorable than it was thought they enjoyed, there being no question as to the opinion of Mr Smythe, that at present "absolute exemption" cannot be granted to any of the members of the Quakers, Tunkers, or Mennonites, other than the "Russian", and the question naturally arises, what further should be done in view of this new turn of the situation. For this reason I am submitting this information for your serious consideration, and counsel. A copy of this is being mailed to Elders, S. Goudie, Thos Reesor, L. J. Burkholder, and S. F. Coffman. May we still earnestly pray our God to come to our help by His mighty power and deliver us and our young men. AMEN.

Fraternally Yours.

D. W. Heise

COPY.

Letter from W.D. Euler to
M.C. Bowman.

Ottawa, May, 29, 1918.

Mr. M. C. Bowman,
Vineland Ont.

Dear Mr. Bowman,

I am writing this from Ottawa, as I came down a day earlier than I at first intended.

I took up the case of the Mennonites with regard to Exemption at the Military Department. There is a conflict of opinion among the legal Military Authorities in the Department as to the status of the Ontario Mennonites under the Military Service Act, one authority holding that they must report and then obtain leave of absence upon presenting a certificate of membership from a bishop, while the other holds that Ontario Mennonites as well as the Manitoba Mennonites are entirely outside of the operation of the Military Service Act.

In order then to clear the matter up, I had a personal interview with the Minister of Justice. He expressed himself as unable to give a decision without careful study, and I left him after making an appointment with him for later in the day, when he hoped to have something more definite for me. I shall see him in about an hour and shall append his opinion to his letter.

As to what is best for your young men to do, it is difficult to judge. If they register, they will have to report later and put in an application for leave of absence, which will be granted on the score of conscientious objection, if they present certificates of membership from the bishop. Said membership must date from not later than July 6, 1917, when the Act came into force.

If they do not register they must be sure ^{to} carry with them a certificate of membership which will serve as a protection against officers rounding up defaulters, but I am not sure it would prove a complete protection, unless the Department makes a definite ruling in the interpretation of the Act. I asked them to make a ruling, but they say that only a test case in court could do that. I then suggested to the Minister that the Government amend the law so as to make it absolutely clear that the Mennonites were outside of the scope of the Act. The Minister appeared to view the suggestion favorably and asked me to write a letter to that effect. I have done so, and enclose a copy herewith for your information, which kindly return to me at Kitchener. I shall return to Kitchener tomorrow and shall be glad to talk the matter over with you if you desire.

Yours truly,

Signed, W.D. Euler.

Later.

I again saw the Minister of Justice; He says that in his opinion all Mennonites are outside the operation of the Military Service Act. But he raises another point. It appears the Military Service Council has just made a report to him, stating they could find no conclusive ground upon which a ruling could be made as to what constitutes a Mennonite. I suggested that surely a Bishop's Certificate should suffice, but he wouldn't accept that as complete proof. He promised to make fuller investigation immediately, in order to make a definite ruling. I pointed out that the day of registration June was close at hand and that the young men should know.

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Thus they would not prejudice any rights they have under the Act. Of course they would have to report at Military Headquarters should they be called, I suppose, and their claim and receive leave of absence as outline before, on presentation of Bishop's certificate which is recognized for purposes of leave of absence. The Minister of Militia assured me last week that conscientious objectors are not required for service of any kind.

I regret that this is the best I could do. The authorities are work making the matter more difficult and complicated than seems necessary, and you will after all, have to use your best judgment.

Sincerely Yours,

Signed, W. D. Euler.

COPY.

Kitchener, Ont. May 29, 1918.

The Hon. The Minister of Justice,
Ottawa, Canada.

Dear Sir:

Considerable uncertainty exists with regard to the status of Mennonites and other conscientious objectors under the Military Service Act. Many of these conscientious objectors reside in North Waterloo, the riding I have the honor to represent, and I have been endeavoring to have their status made clear.

Legal officers of the Department of Militia have given opposing views of the matter, one officer, Col. Biggar, holding that the Ontario Mennonites do not come under the Order in Council which places the Mennonites and Doukhobors in Manitoba outside the scope of the Act altogether, while Col. Mackin is of the opinion that all Mennonites Etc., no matter where found, are included under the Order in Council. If the second view is correct, they would not be required to register, I presume, but would prove themselves outside the operation of the Act by exhibiting certificates of membership from the heads of their Church.

May I suggest that there seems to be no good reason why any distinction should be made among the various classes of Mennonites and others bona fide conscientious objectors, especially in view of the fact that the Ontario Mennonites located largely in Waterloo County claim that they had a treaty with the Government of that time, for the total exemption from military service when they settled in Canada about one-hundred years ago. In any case, it is recognized that the bona-fide conscientious objectors should not be called for military service and therefore, it seems to me advisable to simplify the matter as much as possible. Thus, if any legal doubt exists under the Act as now constituted, I would suggest that the Government could remove all uncertainty by amending Order in Council which would place all Mennonites and others objecting sects outside the operation of the Act. Thus the possession of a membership certificate in said Churches, signed by a Bishop or other ecclesiastical head, would be all the protection necessary, instead of the difficulty some of these people are now having. The effect would be the same, and much unnecessary trouble avoided.

Yours truly,

Signed, W. A. Eiler.



House of Commons

~~OTTAWA~~ Galt, May 30th, 1918.

Rev. S. F. Coffman,

Vineland, Ont.

Dear Mr. Coffman:-

I have your letter of the 28th instant enclosing list of Bishops in the Tunker Church. I have already received this list from Mr. Heize and have forwarded it on to the authorities at Ottawa. Your letter of the 22nd instant which was forwarded to Ottawa, reached me to-day. As I understand the situation now things are greatly improved for your people since that letter was written. Is not the only difficulty which you are now having with the young men who are placed under arrest in Toronto? If I am not correct in this will you kindly let me know.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

F. A. Scott

COPY

Ottawa, Ont., May 31, 1918.

Sir:

Referring to your recent interview, I beg to state that your request has been favorably considered by the Military Service Sub-Committee and I enclose herewith, a letter sent to the General Officers Commanding, Military Districts Nos. 1 and 2, (London and Toronto) on the subject.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) T. Y. Tyndale,
Captain, D.A.A.G.
Secretary,
Military Service Sub-Committee

W. G. Weichel, Esq.
Waterloo, Ont.

Stayner May 31st/₁₈₋

Eld. S. F. Coffman -

Dear Bro. Rec'd your letter
of recent date relative to
Exemption claims of age 19
call.

Would say for your convenience
that at present we have
no names to hand over
as our young men are older
except one & he will not be
19 for some time.

We have an adherent in the
person of Howard Hunsberger
son of Geo Hunsberger who
originally came from Vineland
who lives here near Stayner.

Yours truly,

A. F. Gooding.

(copy)

Ottawa, May 31st, 1918.

To-

The General Officer Commanding,
Military District No 1 & 2.,
London & Toronto.

Status under the M S A 1917. of
Mennonites, Tunkers and Amish.

Pursuance to Headquarter's letter of the 22nd and 29th instant on the marginally noted subject, it has been brought to the attention of the department that a large number of bona fide adherents of these sects were not actually members of the Church on the 6th July, 1917.

It has accordingly been decided that leave may be granted, as stated in the letter of the 22nd, on certificate of one of the Bishops whose names have been submitted, to the effect that the man concerned was prior to July 6th, 1917, a regular attendant at the Church and a bona fide adherent, and has since actually joined the Church.

Captain D.A.A.G.
for Adjutant General

✓
St. Jacobs May 31 15

J. S. Coffman
W. Vineland

Greetings

Inclosed you will find names and addresses of ministers in our branch who have signed certificates of membership. if necessary you may forward them to the proper authorities at Ottawa

May God guide and lead them according to his will

Yours truly

Thos. Reesor

Bishops

Ezra L Martin ✓

RR#1 St Jacobs Out

Freeman Pittenhouse

RR#4 Dunnville

Out

Ministers

John Bowman

Elmira Out

Amos Gingerich

Elmira Out

Nrias Martin

Waterloo ..

Israel Weber

St Jacobs ..

Christian Gayman

Unionville ..

Levi Grove, RR#3 Claremont .

Thomas Pessor

RR#2 Pickering

Ministers ✓

Isaac Pitterhouse
South Cayuga Ont

John Sherk
South Cayuga "

To the best of my knowledge and belief I
certify that _____ was before the
6th of July 1917 a regular attendent of the
Mennonite Church and to the best of my
knowledge and belief had the intention before
that date of joining the Church and has
actually joined since and taken the obligation
as a Mennonite.

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