

R.R. 2

Kitchener July 2nd 1818

S. F. Coffman
Vineland Ont.

Dear Bro Greeting in Jesus name.
When Edward Cober reported
on May 20 in London Ont.
The Officer there ~~he~~ said he
would cancell it this after
noon and he just give him
his old exemption certificate
and told him to carry it
with him as that would
be his protection. And by
Saturday the 25th. The Police
from London - where after
him stating he had not
reported.
As the Police believed us
The Capt telephoned to
London, and they send
a Telegram back. Which
I will send you a copy of.
His old exemption stated

allowed from combatant
service only on account of
religious belief.

If there is any thing further
to do, would you please
advise us.

yours in the Master service

Simon Cober,

Telegram copy

33 m - bk 42 paid 9ex

This man exempt

London Ont May 27-18

C. B. Macaulay Capt
D A P M

Capt A. C. Macaulay

Care chief Police, Kitchena Ont

Edward Cober seven two six six two two A.C.

Ordered to report for duty in error A.A.G.
notified on May 20 man is a Drunkier
exempt from combatant service.

W. E. Wismer.

Deputy Registrar M.S.A.M.D.
No 1.

~~Copy~~

540P

This is all Edward has
at the present.

Wellesley Ont.
July 2nd. 1918.

Dear Brother

S. F. Coffmann; -

Greeting
in the name of Jesus. The
reason of our writing is - that
one of our brethren in the
military age, but got married
last fall, and he has a farm
out in Saskatchewan and is
there about 2 years, and he
wrote to us that they gave
him exemption till the harvest
is past. He showed his
church membership and they
said that would leave him
from Combatant Service only.

What can we do? for ~~him~~
His address is on the other side
(over.)

Address.

Joseph, B. Leis,

Clare. P. O.

Saskatchewan.

He is the only mennonite there
that we know of.

Yours in Faith

C. S. Zehr

Wellesley.
Ont.

Vineland Ont.,
Vineland Ont.: July 2nd, 1918.

Mr. C. Lesslie Wilson,
Ontario Registrar, M.S.A.
Board of Trade Bldg.
Toronto Ont.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of the 27th June, Ult., per W. R. Smyth, regarding the status of the Mennonites in Ontario and the Tunkers, under the Military Service Act, 1917, has been received and noted.

Permit me to say that our standing on the article of war and our attitude toward all military service, as expressed in the Resolutions of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church, in 1917, and the Conference of the Tunker Church, has been handed to the Government at Ottawa. The arrangements which have been made with the Government and the Department concerned regarding our brethren who may be called for service are being complied with, and thus far have proven satisfactory.

The Hon. F. S. Scott, of Galt, Ont., has kindly consented to represent our interests with the Government, and Mr. W. G. Weichel has been active in rendering assistance, since his residence in Waterloo, Ont., has constantly brought him in touch with our people. Our Committee has much appreciated their services, and, for the sake of avoiding complications and misunderstandings which naturally result from general correspondence, we prefer that all matters effecting the Government be referred to the above mentioned Gentlemen. Any information that we can give concerning our people, or that may effect our people as related to the Ontario District, will be gladly given by the undersigned, who has been appointed by the Committee of the Mennonite and Tunker Churches to represent them in such services.

Yours Respectfully,

J. F. Coffman
For the Committe
Committee

Vineland Ont., July 2nd, 1918.

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

Dear Sir:-

Enclosed, please find copies of correspondence which will explain itself. It seems that the District Representative does not understand the position which our people take regarding military service, and seems to think that it will be possible for us to modify our present standing regarding non-combatant service. To compromise our position would be to deny our faith by which we stand. We trust that the Government does not require us to do this.

Information, to-day, tells of the release from jail of Ernest J. Swalm. We hope that the remaining boys who are retained under sentence will soon be released. I have been wondering much whether our boys who report when called will be required to sign and take the medical examination. Their signatures would obligate them to do military duty and accept military regulations. The medical examination would require their classification as soldiers. Under the present arrangement, their signatures to the leave of absence requires them to report regularly and might be construed to imply their consent to do military service when called upon. We do not wish to appear as doubting the sincerity of the arrangements, but note a source of possible complication.

Please note the nature of the Certificates granted our people in the West, and also that granted to the Russian brethren.

Yours truly,

July 2nd 1918
"

Dear, Sir

Mr, S. F. Hoffman

This is from Joe, W.
Kueffer meeting, for
what you have done
for us, Yours Truly
Deacon Daniel, S. Janz

Please let me know
as soon^{as} you can, when
you get it

(\$16.40)

Vineland Ont., July 2nd, 1918.

Mr. W. G. Weichel,
Waterloo, Ont.

Dear Sir:-

Your Letter of the 27th June Ult., Received and noted. I thank you for the information and glad that there seems to be a correct understanding of our position and privileges at headquarters at London. A letter from L. J. Burkholder, the Chairman of the Non-Resistant Relief Organization, states that he was informed at Toronto, by the Assistant Registrar, that the ruling from Ottawa is that we need not register, since doing so only takes extra work and trouble and the men are not required to serve. We are, however, complying with the regulations to register, so that any complications may be avoided.

Regarding the physical examination, and the signing up for service by our brethren, when they report to the Depot for their Leave of Absence, I have thought that such signing up might be construed by some as voluntary enlistment, and made an excuse for afterwards obligating our brethren for service. The physical examination would be of no value and the signing of any documents by our boys signifying their acceptance of the conditions of military service would be inconsistent. Even their signature to the conditions of the Leave of Absence could be wrongly construed. Whatever might be done to avoid our brethren misrepresenting their position and relation to the authorities would be appreciated.

Please find copies of letters which will explain themselves. Especially note the character of Certificates given to our brethren in the West and those given to the Russian Brethren. The Certificates of our brethren grant total exemption and the Russian's sons, Non members, are also exempted.

Thanking you for your many favors, I am,

Yours truly,



House of Commons

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Galt, July 2nd, 1918.

Rev. S. F. Coffman,

Vineland, Ont.

Dear Mr. Coffman:-

I have your letter of the 27th ultimo and am pleased to know that all the cases which you are having difficulty with are being gradually cleared away. I received assurance from Ottawa that any certificate signed by any of the names on the lists submitted by you would be accepted. I have nothing further to give you in way of information on the other matter referred to in your letter. I am afraid that we cannot get anything definite until the Premier and the other members of the Government return from England. With best wishes,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

F. B. Scott
per J. H. Seely.

Elmira, Ont., July 2nd, 1918.

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

Dear Friend:

Greetings.

I received a letter from Brother Reesor this morning which had enclosed a copy of a letter from the Ontario Registrar. This letter states that the Central Appeal Judge has ruled that the Tunkers and Ontario Mennonites are not excepted from the Military Service Act.

Possibly you have also received a copy of this letter which further advises a conference of Mennonites with a view as to seeing whether we could not aid in the different non-combatant services.

If the ruling is to be upheld then in my opinion we should at once take steps to reach an understanding as to how to meet this new turn of affairs as I fear that action will at once be taken. However, it is yet to be learned whether the ruling will be upheld.

Your advice on the matter will be greatly appreciated.

Yours very truly,

A. M. Berringer

Let us continue in prayer and hope in these anxious times.

Vineland Ont., July 4th, 1918.

J. M. Shenk,
Elida Ohio.

Dear Brother:- Greeting in the name of Jesus, our Saviour.

Your letter of the 27th June, received and noted. I am glad to hear from you, but sorry that such questions are required to be raised concerning the coming of any of our brethren from one country to another. I am also sorry that I cannot give all the information that would be necessary in order to have a clear understanding of the situation between the two countries.

Yesterday I made a trip to our nearest town to get information concerning immigration into Canada from the United States. There is no immigration office there, but those officials with whom I conversed seemed to think that there would be no difficulty on the part of those who desired to come into Canada as settlers. There are constantly coming into Canada those persons who desire to make their homes here, especially in the Western Provinces. Tourists are also allowed to come into the Country but would require to have some credentials proving their expectation of returning, especially if of military age.

The chief trouble which Bro Ross would have would be with the U. S. authorities. I am not able to give you any information as to the position that they might take on allowing the eldest son to come into Canada to reside permanently. The present treaty which is being arranged between Great Britain and the United States, effecting the citizens of each country regarding their service in the army while residents of the other country, will effect all American citizens in Canada who are of Military age. But this treaty is not yet in force. When in force, all citizens of either country will be required to return to their own country for service when called, or report to the authorities in the country where they reside I believe, however, that our people will have the same privileges under the treaty which they now have.

At present, our brethren are allowed freedom from military service under special provisions. In the West they are entirely Exempted, and their Church Certificates are so certified to by the Provincial Registrar. In Ontario, they are given leave of absence when called, and their leave is unlimited, save as to reporting by letter each three months.

This is not just as we prefer it, but the best that could be arranged for by the authorities under existing statutes. Previous statutes entirely exempted us. The Present Act specified Mennonites as Exempt, but has been construed by the letter, to apply only to the Russian brethren. We are hoping that better conditions will be provided for us at a later period, but we do not know when that will be. Conditions are somewhat uncertain, but we have the assurance of the representatives of the Government that no service of any kind will be required of our people.

I do not know the Brothers intentions in coming to Canada. If he comes to reside permanently, he will have no difficulty in getting through, except from American Officers. If he resides here as an American U.S. citizen, he will be subject to U.S. military laws in a short time under the new treaty. If he claims to become a Canadian Citizen, he will require some months of residence and intentional papers, and will then be subject to conditions in Canada. His son would require the same process in case he became of age.

I would advise your seeing some person there who knows present conditions under the military Act as to how to proceed with the U.S. authorities at the line. Any attempt to cross, that looks as if it were an effort to evade military service, is strictly dealt with. Yet, if one prefers to change his home from one country to another he has a right to do so. I hope that the Brother may succeed in making the change.

J.M.S. 4/2.

Uncle John Swartz wrote me some time ago regarding one of his boys coming to Canada. He also asked concerning possible locations. It may be possible for you to see his letter and it may provide some information as, this letter may also be of some help to him.

There is no doubt but that our people would find conditions here more congenial than in the U. S., provided that conditions here are not changed. This is something that cannot be warranted. The change of Government here and the sentiments of those who are in positions to make the laws will govern the future policy of the Government regarding this question. There has no agreement been found that would bind the Government to the privileges accorded us. The only ground that we have is the past attitude of the Government to our people. We may claim the grounds of religious liberty, as a constitutional right, but this question has not required to be raised. We are now trusting in the providences of God who holds all authority and power in His own hands.

At any time I will be glad to give what information I may, and am sorry that this is not as full as it might be. But the times are so uncertain and the changes so great and matters so complicated that we cannot do better.

We are in usual health except my wife who is not so well. Remember us in your prayers, as we also pray for those who are in distress or trouble.

Yours in faith,

S. F. Coffman

Vineland Ont., July 3rd, 1918.

Dea. Daniel S. Jantzi,
Milverton Ont.

Dear Brother:- Greeting in the name of our Saviour.

Your letter of July 2nd, with the enclosed Money Order for Sixteen Dollars and forty cents, (\$16.40) was duly received and it with thanksgiving to God for the mercies that are daily granted to us. We feel truly grateful to our many brethren and sisters who have been showing their appreciation for the little that we have been able to do for them. The labor was pleasant in that it had so important and such an appreciated object. We know that there was thanksgiving to God on the part of many, for the Spirit of the thanksgiving reached even unto us. We could not ask our brethren and sisters to make more sacrifice than they had made in the sorrows that came to their homes when their sons were called for service which they could not do without sinning against their convictions and against their God. We would rather have shared in their sorrows and would even now refrain from adding to their burdens. The offering that you have given as a token of sympathy with us in our labors is received in the Spirit in which it was given, as an offering from the Lord our God. We thank Him for it and wish to express to you the love which we have for all the brotherhood because of their love shown to us.

We have been strangers and have had but little knowledge of each other, but these tokens of love make us feel that there are other brethren and sisters with whom we fellowship in spirit and whose hearts are filled with the love of Christ and His work. To all such we extend our greetings of love and pray that God will bless you abundantly for your gifts which help to bear the burdens of home and the service of our Master. We only ask that you continue to remember us in your prayers, that the Lord may grant renewed health to my companion in the home that her health and strength may be restored and we may be enabled to continue in the work to which He has called us.

Let us continue steadfast in the faith of Christ. It requires courage to stand against the trials that have come to us as a people, but it also requires grace from God to be able to let our lights shine and our lives be a true pattern of our Saviour. May we each consecrate ourselves to our Saviour that His life may abide in us and make us His true witnesses of a life that is separated from the world and its follies, and set apart for the work of bringing other souls into the Kingdom of life and light. It may be that He will soon come and we shall then be ready to meet Him.

Again wishing all the blessing of God and the Joy of His presence and the bounty of His blessings upon all, I am,

Humbly yours in faith and service,

S. J. Coffman

Vineland Ont., July 3rd, 1918.

Thomas Reesor,
Pickering Ont. R.R.

Dear Brother:- Greeting in the name of Jesus.

Today I received a letter from Brother N.M. Bearinger in which he referred to a letter which was sent him as from yourself regarding the proposal by the Ontario Registrar that our people should hold a Conference and see what could be done toward compromising in the matter of non-combatant service. I had just been writing some letters on this point and am enclosing you copies of letters sent to Mr. Scott, and to Mr. Weichel. I have also sent copies to the Brethren Heise and Burkholder, as members of our Committee. This copy will show the position which it occurs to us to be wisest in the present issue. We should avoid opening up this question again. The officials at Toronto are subject to the decisions of the Government at Ottawa and we are going now, according to advice from the Militia department at Ottawa. It would be useless to again discuss the question at the request of the officials at Toronto. I have referred to our standing and position in regard to these questions as stated in the documents handed to Ottawa at the time our request for consideration was first brought before the Government. Those statements are now on file at Ottawa and stand for our present claims. We know that there is now a movement on foot to impose more severe penalties upon the conscientious objectors, but as long as the Government sees fit to allow leave of absence to our Brethren we will not fall under the censure of the courts martial. Were we to take the matter up with the Ontario Registrar, I fear that we would not receive as favorable consideration as we now have and not as favorable as have our brethren from the Provincial Registrars in Saskatchewan and Alberta. I am enclosing copies of Church Certificates which our Brethren and the Russian hold in the West.

Since there have been a number of the "letters from the Ontario Registrar sent out, I am sending copies of the letter which was sent as a reply, to all of the Bishops concerned. This will perhaps clear up the matter at the present time. We trust that there will be no further trouble, and that the persons named to act in our behalf will be able to guide us as far as our relations with these authorities are concerned.

I might say further, that the ruling of the Chief Justice is already provided for by the granting to us of a leave of absence. There is a difference between "exemption" and "leave of absence". The first excuses one from going into service, the second excuses one who is subject to service from going into it.

A letter from Mr. Scott just received says that he fears the matter of our presenting the fund to the Government will be required to wait until the return of the Cabinet Members from England. But we will be able to go on with the collection of the funds.

Ernest Swalm is released from the St. Catharines jail. He is likely on his way home. We thank the Lord for his remembrances to us all.

Yours in faith,

Vineland Ont., July 3rd, 1918.

Brethren; Greeting.

This letter is being sent to all those whose names have been authorized by the Government to be signed to Certificates. It seems that such have received communications from the Registrar's Office, Toronto, bearing the following information and suggestion; or similar matter.

"The Central Appeal Judge has now ruled that Tunkers and Ontario Mennonites are not excepted from the Military Service Act." - - -

"In view of what has passed between us, I venture to again call your attention to the advisability of the members of your community holding a conference with a view to seeing whether you cannot see your way to make a compromise on the subject of non-combatant service with Hospital Corps or other non-combatant units." -----.

A reply was sent in the name of the Committee, in which the following statements were made bearing on the questions mentioned.

"Permit me to say that our standing on the article of war, and our attitude toward all military service, as expressed in the Resolutions of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church, in 1917, and the Conference of the Tunker Church, has been handed to the Government at Ottawa. The arrangements which have been made with the Government and the Department concerned, regarding our brethren who may be called for service, are being complied with, and thus far have proven satisfactory."

"The Hon. F. S. Scott of Galt, Ont., has kindly consented to represent our interests with the Government, and Mr. W. G. Weichel has been active in rendering assistance, since his residence in Waterloo Ont. has constantly brought him in touch with our people. Our Committee has much appreciated their services, and, for the sake of avoiding complications and misunderstandings which naturally result from general correspondence, we prefer that all matters effecting the Government be referred to the above mentioned Gentlemen. -----".

From the above, it will be noted that we consider it inadvisable to reopen the questions which have already been taken into consideration by the Government at Ottawa. To do so now, would be to invite complications which our friends, Mr. Scott and Mr. Weichel, have been able to adjust and avoid. Since we have dealt with the Officials at Headquarters it would not be wise to make the questions a local affair. We have offered to give any information that might be needed as far as Local matters are concerned.

The decision of the Chief Justice does not effect our present arrangement with the Government concerning the release of our brethren from service. The present arrangement was made on account of the opinion being given that our brethren were not excepted and not exempt. They are obliged to register and are then given their leave of absence.

Let us watch and pray that the Lord may deliver us from the trials and temptations that surround us on every hand. Let us keep humble before Him and faithful toward Him, interceding in behalf of the conditions that have brought about the sorrows of the world, that we may assist in bringing about the restoration of peace and good will among men. May His will be done in all things.

Yours in faith, and service,

Gormley, July, 3 rd, 1918.

Beloved Brother.

In the Name of Him who said, " My presence shall go with you "

I beg to inform you that I was to Toronto yesterday to see the D. O. C. with ^{ref} to those of our Boys who are still in BONDS, having concluded that perhaps some unfavorable condition had developed in connection with their cases, or that probably some requirement on our part had as yet not been fully met by us. I was assured however by the D. O. C. that everything had been fully complied with both on our part, and on the part of the Militia department, and the commanding officers, in order that these Boys might be released. and that all that was necessary on our part was to " Possess our Souls in patience " as the D. O. C expressed it, until the full procedure works our through the various Military, and Civil Authorities. So if this is all that is necessary, perhaps we need to pray that more patience be granted us, and let the Lord still work for us as He certainly has done in the past.

You have no doubt noticed the new instructions, with reference to C. O,s .Eight of which will be tried in Toronto tomorrow, and if found guilty, will be sentenced to "LIFE IMPRISONMENT" and perhaps turned over to the "FIRING SQUAD".

Let us be very alert, and pray much.

Yours as Ever

A. W. Weiser

Vineland Ont., July 3rd, 1918.

L. J. Burkholder,
Markham Ont.

Dear Brother Greeting.

Your letters received and always glad to get a little counsel and comfort from them.

I am enclosing some copies of correspondence which will be of interest to you. The tone is what we have been noting from some certain quarters, and perhaps what we may expect. There is a veiled intimation that the more severe penalties that are being suggested may be visited upon some of our brethren. There is also an impression left that our position is not of sincerity, in the estimation of some people. We want to be true to our profession. We have plenty of precedents for the position which we hold, but our fore-fathers are gone to their rewards and we are here holding the same faith as a matter of conviction in our own hearts.

It seems that there is a great discrepancy in the manner of dealing with our position in the estimation of authorities here in Ontario. Your report concerning the decisions at Ottawa and that of Mr. Smyth is very opposite. And both the Assistant Registrar and Mr. Smyth are in the same department. This is strange, to say the least.

You will note the tone of the letter to Mr. Wilson. It was my purpose to avoid opening a discussion of the affairs which we have previously brought to the attention of the Government at Ottawa. It will do us no good to go over the whole matter again. I am looking up historical evidences now, in case our position should be questioned by some of these persons. There is no evidence that our brethren generally accepted military service in any country except in late years in Europe and we know that there is no fellowship between us and those brethren.

You will be interested in the two certificates, copies of which are enclosed. Who will endeavor to disentangle the present confusion among the authorities? It is evident that the righteousness of our claims impresses the Government, but how to compromise the situation with the general proclamation under the M. S. A. is the problem not yet fully solved. We need to look to the Lord for His help in this matter.

Will be glad to hear from you again. Hope all are well. Ella is having another spell of her former symptoms. Her side is very sore today. We hope that the trouble will soon pass over again. We are looking to Him for our help. Remember us in prayer.

Yours in faith,

S. F. Coffman

I am receiving some inquiries about the letter from Mr. Smyth, and am replying that we have sent a letter referring him to our correspondence with Ottawa.

Copy. (Russian Certificate)

CERTIFICATE.

To Whom it May Concern:

This is to Certify that-----

-----whose signature appears
below, is a Mennonite, and as son of Mennonite
parents. He is exempted from military service
by Order in Council of 1873, exempting
Mennonites from all forms of Military service.

Signed:

an ordained Minister.

Countersigned:

Signature of Bearer,-----

Dated at, -----this---day of -----1918.

Vineland Ont., July 3rd, 1918.

D. W. Heise,
Gormley Ont. .

Dear Brother in faith;- Greeting.

Your letter with enclosures received and noted. Am glad to learn that you have a response to your efforts to get the necessary authority for the bishops and officers of your Church in connection with the exemption of the brethren. I am also glad to know that nearly all of the brethren are now free from the camps and trust that the remaining one will also soon be at their homes again. Yesterday I was in St. Catharines and learned that Bro. Ernest Swalm has been released from jail and was sent to the Niagara camp in order to secure his papers and then return home. I have not yet learned of his returning home. The Governor of the jail informed me that he had received notice that the Court martial sentence had been set aside. This looks very favorable for the brethren yet in the camps and at Burwash.

I am enclosing you copies of letters received and some that were recently sent out. We will have to be very careful that some one does not take advantage of circumstances and make it very hard for some of our brethren. It seems that the Government has thus far been true to the promises made us and we should not be suspicious of the future relations with the powers that rule over us; but we are aware that there are some antagonistic spirits at work as well as those who are favorable.

I have written to the Department in Toronto regarding the liberation of the men in question and received notice that Col. Windeyer had charge of that special work and that he would report. Have had no report from him. You are likely in touch with him regarding the matter.

As soon as we receive word regarding the collection of the funds for the Relief Organization, I think that we will be ready to proceed with the same. The brethren are willing to do something and I think that the response will be very liberal. The need is certainly great and constantly increasing. My the Lord help us to do our duty along the right lines. We do not want to destroy life and should make a much greater sacrifice in order to save it.

Yours in faith,

S. J. Coffman

Vineland Ont., July 3rd, 1918.

Nicholas Nafziger,
Brunner Ont.

Dear Brother in the Lord:-

Greetings in His name who loved and gave Himself for our sins that He might redeem us to God and to eternal life.

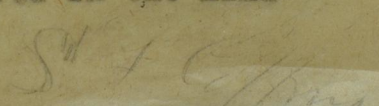
A very short time ago I received a letter from the Deacon of your congregation enclosing a Post Office Money Order for the amount of \$21.45. By some means the letter has become mislaid and the name of the brother who sent is not in mind. I hope he will pardon me for not answering at once and acknowledging the gift of the Church.

It gives us a feeling of humility to think of the many kind expressions of love and helpfulness toward us in this time when we have tried to do our duty as servants of the Lord. We have felt very much repaid for all that we have done by the results that have been effected, and the joy that has been brought to so many of our brethren and sisters whose greatest desire was that their sons should not be obliged to forsake their faith and do what was contrary to their belief in the obedience of the gospel of Christ. We know that it would have occasioned sadness in the homes to have had the sons leave the home and go into a distant land, but the greater sadness was that under such conditions they would have engaged in things that was contrary to their faith and a sin against their God. There could not have been that comforting assurance that all was well with them in their spiritual lives. These things may seem possible to some people, but to us it would have afforded no degree of comfort.

If the Lord has been able to use a weak instrument in His hands to help to comfort his children we feel to thank Him for it and He will give the reward. At the same time our hearts are warmed with an inexpressible love toward the many brethren and sisters who have shared in the burdens of this work by their gifts of love. He knows the deeds of the right hand which are hidden from the left hand will give a sufficient reward for all the kindness shown. If the need should require we feel that we owe a debt to the brother hood to continue these labors in their behalf and shall continue to do so with joy. We only ask that the dear brethren and sister will continue to hold us up in prayer that we may be able to do the things that will accomplish the most for the welfare of His people and the saving of souls from eternal death. We need your prayers in our home for we also have afflictions and trials. She ^{who} has stood faithfully by as a helper in our labors, needs physical strength to continue her home duties and spiritual service, for which we are now looking to the Lord in a special manner. An old trouble, resulting from Gall Stones, seems to have returned and troubles her. But we realize that that Lord has been caring for us in many remarkable ways, and has heard the prayers of His children as in days of old. We thank Him for these daily blessings and look to him, believing that He will always be true to His Word and bless us as we need.

May the ties of affection and the bonds of love and unity of the Spirit keep us close to Him and near to each other. May we have the confidence that our troubles often bring us nearer to each other and prepare us for the happy meeting that awaits His faithful children when we shall rest in His presence, free from wars and strifes and the sins of the world. With greetings of love to all who have shared in the kind gift of love, I am,

Humbly and truly, Yours in faith,



Vineland Ont., July 3rd, 1918.

Bishop John Sider,
Perry Station Ont.

Dear Brother:- Greeting in the name of Him who loves us.

Your message was very hard to receive over the phone last evening. I was anxious that you should hear what I had to say, and left my Independent Phone and went to Bro Kratz's expecting that the Bell phone would give better satisfaction but found that the trouble was on another section of the line somewhere. The interruptions were very bad.

You were likely able to understand that Ernest Swalm was released from the jail in St. Catharines on Monday. He received notice that his sentence had been washed away, and that he was at liberty to get his papers from the authorities at the camp at Niagara. Mr. Bush allowed him to go to the camp. I have heard nothing since yesterday, when I met Mr. Bush in St. Catharines.

Regarding the other brethren, I have had no further notice since making inquiry last week and hearing that the matter was being referred to Mr. Windyer, whose department looked after these affairs. I have not heard from that department. The boys are undoubtedly being looked after I think that Brother Heize has also kept in touch with them. A letter from Brother Heize encloses copies of the replies from Ottawa and Toronto acknowledging the receipt of his telegram and also accepting the authority of the signatures of the bishops in the Tunker Church. This will now straighten out the cause of some of the trouble, but it may not hasten the proceedings of the officials whose time is very much occupied with all kinds of problems. There will likely be more trouble in those departments if the action of the Alberta Courts of Justice are followed up regarding the cancelling of the exemptions granted under the M.S.A.

Received a letter from Mr. Wilson, per W.R. Smyth, very similar in tone to the one received by yourself. I replied stating that our position as set out by the resolutions of our general Conference and the Your Conference was in the hands of the Government at Ottawa. Also that Mr. Scott and Mr. Weichel were representing us with the Government. I do not know how he will take to the suggestion that is contained in the statement. I stated also that we were complying with the arrangements that had been made for us at the present time. We do not want to take up our questions again with the District officials. What has been done for us by Ottawa, will do more good than to take up the questions locally. There is now a difference in the privileges accorded us and those accorded our brethren in the West. I have referred this fact to Mr. Scott.

We are still looking to the Lord to open the way for us in our further problems. There may be some other questions to face, and we will need to have His help in them as well as in present problems. May we cling close to Him. His help is our only salvation.

May the Lord be with you in your work. Remember us in your prayers as we need grace in all things.

Yours in faith,

Vineland Ont., July 3rd 1918.

N. M. Bearinger,
Elmira Ont.

Dear Brother;- Greeting.

Your letter of the 2nd Inst., Received and noted. The letter from Brother Reesor was undoubtedly similar to those sent out to a number of other ministers and Bishops of the different churches of our organization. It would seem that the authorities at Toronto are not aware of the facts stated to the Government at Ottawa at the time of their meeting our deputation. It would be unnecessary for us to take up this matter with them on account of our having official information from the militia council at Ottawa, and the Toronto Branch is subject to those decisions.

To open up a consideration of the question at this time would be to interfere with all of the arrangements that have been made for us. The better way, seems to be to refer the subject mentioned in the communication to those who are representing us with the Government and we have already done so. We have also referred the Registrar to our representatives with the Government. It will be impossible for us to work uniformly and harmoniously if we do not pursue this course. I am enclosing a letter which will be sent to all of the Ministers and Bishop who are authorized to sign certificates and who have likely received notice from the same sources as has Brother Reesor.

The Decision of the Chief Justice does not interfere with the arrangements we are now using with reference to the freedom of our brethren from service. His decision has made our present arrangement necessary. Since we are not excepted and have no exemption under the Order in Council, all we can do is to register and receive a Leave of Absence. Our brethren will be free from service as long as the Authorities continue to grant the Leave of Absence. This is not exemption. It is an excusing from service those who have an excuse for not serving after being called. Exempted persons are not called. According to this you will be able to see that the Chief Justice's decision has no further power in the case of our young men who register and are excused from serving by the military officers. This was the only arrangement that the Government could make for us under the decisions of the Chief Justice. And yet, there are those in authority and in the chief Councils who hold that our people are under the exemptions and also some say that we are among the Excepted classes. They will have to make their own opinions unanimous. We know that our position entitles us to total exemption since there is no place under the Act which describes our case, except the Exceptions, and we are forbidden that. We are excepting now just what the Government has been able to grant us under late decisions.

We need to continue in prayer that the Lord may safely guide us through the toils and trials that are everywhere about us. Any new developments that may come to your notice, if you would feel to report them, we would be glad for the information. I have sent a copy of the letter from Mr. Wilson to Mr. Weichel, Waterloo, and to Mr. Scott, M. P., Galt. They will look into these matters for us.

Thanking you for your interest and help in this work and praying that we may continue to labor in the spirit of peace and love for the sake of the Master, I am,

Yours in faith,

S. A. Coffey

Simon Cober,
Kitchener, Ont. R.R.#2.

Vineland Ont., July 4th, 1918.

Dear Brother;-

Greeting in the name of the Lord.

Your letter stating the case of Edward Cober, was received and noted.

There is no reason why his old exemption certificate and the telegram from Mr. Wismer, Registrar, will not avail as far as protecting him from being molested by officers is concerned. But, if he is of the military age of those now called to service he will be required to report at the ~~special~~ Headquarters to which he is called and then get his "Leave of Absence" the same as the other brethren who have been called. But if he is not of the age, 20 to 23, whose exemptions were cancelled, his other papers will hold good. He should also have his Church Membership Certificate.

There is nothing further to do in this case. Unless he is called he may claim his exemption with the present papers.

If he is called he must go to the proper officers at the camp and present his proofs that he is a member of the Tunker Church, and that will secure his release as stated above.

I hope that you will have no further trouble. All of the brethren who have been detained in the camps and those who were courtmartialled and in prison are now released, thanks to the goodness and help of the Lord.

With your permission I will keep the copy of that telegram to use for reference regarding these military cases. It may be of some help to others.

Wishing you well and free from further trouble in these trials, I am,

Yours in faith,

Remember us also in prayer.

B. F. Coffman

Vineland Ont., July 4th, 1918

C. S. Zehr,
Wellesley, Ont.

Dear Brother;- Greeting in the name of Jesus.

Your letter received and noted. I am not sure that I will be able to give advise in this case that will be of any greater help than that which has been done in the case of brother Leis in the West.

You are probably aware that the Brethren in the West are given a different treatment than those in the East. The Ontario Mennonites are supposed to be exempt from Combatent service only. The brethren in the West are exempt from all military service. I am enclosing you a copy of the Certificates which our brethren are using in the West. They are signed by the minister and Deacon of the Congregation and are then countersigned by the Registrar of Saskatchewan. This Certificate then exempts the brother from all military service. The Russian brethren are also exempt from all service and are not obliged to register or apply for exemption. Their Certificates show that they are excluded from the Military Service Act by the Order in Council, 1873.

In case that you have no congregations of your brethren in the West, who are able to give Brother Leis a Certificate, it might be well for you to fill out one of the Certificates given to your members and state on it that Brother Leis has resided in the West for two years, and is a permanent resident there. Let him send the Certificate to the Registrar and ask him to countersign the same. This would give him the same protection that is afforded our brethren.

If there are congregation of your brethren in the West let the minister and deacon give Brother Leis a Certificate such as the copy of the certificate of our brethren which is herein enclosed. This could then be sent to the Registrar for his signature exempting the Brother.

There is yet one other plan which I would offer to suggest, and that is, for Brother Leis to send a Certificate signed by yourself to one of our ministers who may be the nearest to him and have him endorse the Certificate, and then send it in to the Registrar in Saskatchewan for the Countersign.

If there would be no serious objection to Brother Leis sending his church letter to one of the Congregations in Saskatchewan and being accepted there as a member while he is in the West and away from the home Church, it might solve the question by his claiming to be a member of the Church (which is of the same faith) and getting his Certificate from the minister of the Congregation to which he applied for membership.

I could not think of any other way to get him free from all trouble except by some of the plans suggested. He could claim freedom from military service as a member of the A. Mennonite Church, and go through the same Process as do the brethren here and get his "leave of Absence" the same as the brethren here, but the difficulty is, that this arrangement is made only with the Registrars and the Officers Commanding in the Districts of London and Toronto. It does not cover the case of our brethren in the West who are under the arrangement which I have mentioned. I would suggest trying some of the plans suggested above as probably the easiest solution of the situation.

I will send a letter to Brother Leis as soon as possible and give him some of these plans. You write him also and give him your suggestion and I will tell him to wait until he hears from you, and suggest that you write to Brother Isiah Rosenberger, our minister at Guernsey, Sask for advice also. Yours in faith

Duntroon July 4th 1918

S. F. Coffman
Vineland, Ont.

My dear bro. in the Lord:

May the love of God, the fellowship of His dear Son, and the indwelling of His Holy Spirit be your enjoyment continually is my prayer for you and also the family.

I received your letter last week also a letter from D. W. Heise containing about the same information; after waiting until last Sat. June 29th I phoned the Governor at St. Catharines asking if anything had been done for Ernest's release & He said no. I at once wrote D. W. Heise and he went to Toronto and had another interview with the D. O. C. He said (I'll make short) to Bro Heise you have did all you could, and also the Militia Depart-

(2)

present, and The commanding Officers
 in order that these boys might
 be released, All that was necessary
 now on our part was to "possess our
 souls in patience" until the full
 procedure works out through
 the various Military, and Civil
 authorities. So if that is all
 I feel we can patiently wait.
 I received this letter ^{from L.O. W. H.} to-day and
 also one returned to Duntroon that
 I had written on July 1st. I
 immediately phoned to Mr. Bush
 and asked the reason it had
 been returned and he said
 that he (Mr. Bush) had Ernest's
 discharge papers and that Ernest
 had gone to Camp to get
 his clothes and some other
 reasons, ^{that} I could not hear plain
 enough to make out what it
 was, and that Ernest ought to
 be home in a few days. If he
 gets his clothes along with his

though he had been acquainted
 with you for years. I suppose
 he has heard me speak so much
 about your kindness to us,
 and interest manifested in his
 release that he felt acquainted
 with you at first sight. He also
 spoke of your kindness in offering
 him money or help in any way
 he needed on going home. Bro
 John Sider, Givvin Sider & I should
 were to visit him a week ago yesterday
 and brot him 2 suits of clothes to
 go home in. Ernest wrote and
 said he never knew ^{before} there was
 such love among God's children.
 Surely we appreciate all kindness
 shown us from all God's children, and
 pray that God may reward and also
 compensate in this time, all that
 have so faithfully remembered us. I
 believe that God will answer that prayer.
 Now bro Coffman I want to give
 you ^{or wife} a ^{great} pressing invitation
 to visit us and also children. We
 will be pleased to have you
 come any time convenient for you.
 "Now may the peace of God, richly dwell in
 your hearts by faith and may you continue
 to pray for us yours in Christian love
 Isaac Swahn

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
MILITARY SERVICE BRANCH

OFFICE OF ONTARIO REGISTRAR

UNDER MILITARY SERVICE ACT

BOARD OF TRADE BUILDING

TORONTO,
ONTARIO
July 4th, 1918.

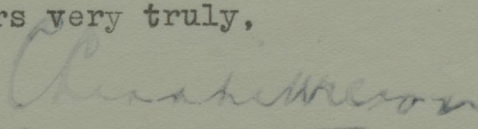
Mr. L.H. Burkholder,
Acting Bishop - Mennonite Church,
Markham, Ont.

Dear Sir:-

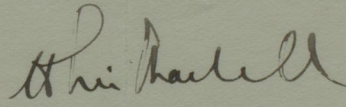
In reply to your letter of the 3rd, I beg to inform you that since our interview on the 19th, we have received instructions from Ottawa that the Ontario Mennonites are in exactly the same position as Tunkers, and are not exceptions to the Act, but must register, and claim exemption on conscientious grounds in exactly the same manner as other conscientious objectors. I understand that the Chief Public Representative has written to the Bishops of the Mennonite Church in Ontario instructing them that those men who come within Class 1 of the Military Service Act, as now defined, will be required to register at once, if they have not already done so.

You refer to a letter under date of the 21st, but I have no recollection of having received this. However, the questions which you asked in that are now covered by this new interpretation of the Act, issued by the Department of Justice.

Yours very truly,


ONTARIO REGISTRAR.

Per


Assistant Registrar.

HEM*EMS.

COPY.

OFFICE OF ONTARIO REGISTRAR. M.S.A

Toronto Ont. July 4th, 1918.

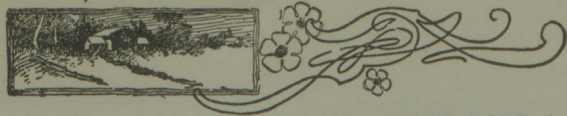
Mr. L. J. Burkholder, Acting Bishop,
Markham, Ont.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 3rd, I beg to inform you that since our interview on the 19th Ult. we have received instructions from Ottawa that the Ontario Mennonites are in exactly the same position as the Tunkers, and are not exceptions to the Act, but must register and claim exemption on religious grounds in exactly the same manner as other conscientious objectors. I understand that the Chief Public Representative has written to the Bishops of the Mennonite Church in Ontario instructing them that these men who come within Class I of the Military Service Act as now defined will be required to Register at once if they have not already done so.

(Signed) C. Lesslie Wilson,
Ontario Registrar.

Per. H. Erie Machell Asst. Registrar.



THE LORD is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness: but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 2 Pet. 3:9.

Ridgeway July 5th 1916
S. F. Coffman. My Best Greeting

As far as I know none of your members are detained as prisoners on account of the military service act

Can you tell me the reason that some of ours are detained, such as Earnest Swalm of Nottawa, and Charlie Wright of Wainfleet can you account for it.

We have exciting enquiries about the matter and would like to give an answer to those that ask

Expecting to hear from you by return mail

As Ever

Asa Bearse

M.F.B.440.

PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBER
MILITIA AND DEFENCE.

In reply please quote

No. 2MD 34-H-14.

149 College Street

Toronto, Ont. July 5th 1918.

To:-

Mr. S. F. Coffman,
Vineland, Ont.

#D3235130 Pte. J. H. Heise
2nd Depot Battalion 1st C.O.R.

With further reference to this office letter of June 28th, I beg to inform you that instructions have been issued to release the marginally named man from Burwash and that leave until further orders be granted.

RCW/LS.

R. C. Wuddeyer

Lieut.-Colonel
for A.A.G., M.D.No.2.

PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBER

M.F.B.440.

In reply please quote

MILITIA AND DEFENCE.

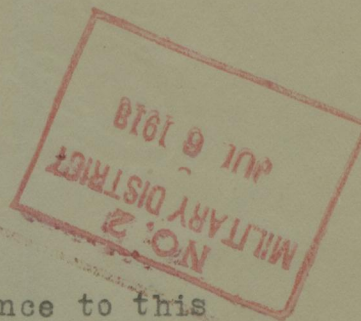
No. ~~2MD 18-W-26~~

149 College Street

Toronto, Ont. July 5th 1918.

To:-

Mr. S. F. Coffman,
Vineland, Ont.



#(D)3039061 Pte. C.H.Wright
1st Depot Battalion 1st C.O.R.

With further reference to this office letter of June 27th, I beg to inform you that instructions have been issued to release the marginally named man from Burwash and that leave until further orders be granted.

RCW/LS.

R. C. Whaley

Lieut.-Colonel
for .A.G., M.D.No.2.

C. LESSLIE, WILSON,
ONTARIO REGISTRAR

A. F. BARR,
H. E. MACHELL,
ASSISTANT REGISTRARS

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
MILITARY SERVICE BRANCH

OFFICE OF ONTARIO REGISTRAR

UNDER MILITARY SERVICE ACT

BOARD OF TRADE BUILDING

TORONTO, July 5th., 1918.
ONTARIO

L. J. Burkholder, Esq.,
Acting Bishop, Mennonite Church,
Markham, Ont.

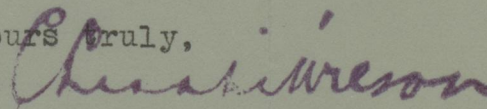
Dear Sir:

The Central Appeal Judge has now ruled that Tunkers and Ontario Mennonites are not excepted from the Military Service Act. Therefore all members and adherents of the Church born since 1882 and now 19 years of age, and in the future as they become 19 years of age, must register under the Act. When their cases come to be dealt with they may raise whatever claims for exemption either from full service or combatant service as they may be advised.

You had better see that all the persons in your congregation coming within the above description registers at once, if they have not already done so.

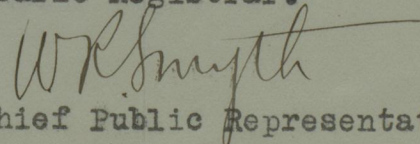
In view of what has passed between us, I venture to again call your attention to the advisability of the members of your community holding a conference with a view to seeing whether you cannot see your way to make a compromise on the subject of non-combatant service with Hospital Corps or other non-combatant units. With the example of your brethren during the Napoleonic Wars and during the American Civil War, it seems to me that you should find some better use for your young men than having them sent to prison.

Yours truly,



Ontario Registrar.

Per-



Chief Public Representative.

WRS-M.

July 6th 1918

Dear Sir

Mr Hoffman

There is no Bishop

John, W. Stueffer

in this locate, but

there is one Joseph, W.

Stueffer, and one

John, J. Stueffer.

Yours Truly D. S. Gantz

Vineland Ont., July 8, 1918.

Joseph B. Leis,
Elrose, Sask.

Dear Brother:- Greeting.

A letter from Brother C. S. Zehr, of Wellesley Ont. was received a few days ago making some inquiry as to what may be done in your behalf in order to secure your release from the obligation of doing military service as a member of the Amish Mennonite Church. He says that you presented your Church Membership Certificate and states that you were told that it would not be honored as exempting you from service, but only exempts you from non-combatant service. Now, the Authorities in some places are not aware of the fact that the faith of the Amish and the Mennonite Church is the same in regard to war. They are right in assuming that Churches other than the Mennonites and Tunkers are exempted only from combatant service and you are understood by them to belong to some other Church. In Ontario our brethren are also placed on the list with other churches and are said to be exempted only from combatant service, but arrangements have been made to allow our brethren to ask for a leave of absence on account of their faith, and such leave is granted to them. In the West, our brethren are obliged to secure Certificates of Membership which are signed by the minister and deacon, and they are sent to the Registrar and he also signs them and they are then carried in order to show to any one concerned that they are not subject to any military service. The brethren in the West and in the East are thus placed on different basis.

I have written to Brother Zehr in reply to his letter. You will likely hear from him with regard to the proper course for you to take in order to avail yourself of some of the means that may be offered for your relief from military service. I do not know how close you may be to some of the Mennonite or Amish congregations in the West. There are some members living near Herbert Sask, and there is a congregation at Guernsey Sask. Guernsey is 75 miles East of Saskatoon on the Yorkton branch and Herbert is 26 miles East of Swift Current on the main line C.P.R. Brother Isaiah Rosenberger is the Minister at the Guernsey Congregation. If you would write to him, he might give you some special information that would be a help to you. He has been dealing with the Saskatchewan Registrar in regard to the exemption of our people in the West and would be able to give you information. If you were not too far away it might be well for you to go and see him. You should, at least be associated in some way with some of our Amish or Mennonite Congregations in the West, and I am sure that it would be a help to you. I suggested to Brother Zehr that it might be a good plan for you to take your Certificate from your home congregation and have it signed also by one of the Western ministers and then have it countersigned by the Saskatchewan Registrar. But, Brother Zehr will give you instructions and it will be best for you to keep in touch with him.

It will be some satisfaction to me, personally to know how you get along in this matter and I will be glad to hear from you if convenient to you to write me. I am not able to find Elrose on the map, and so do not know your location. Be faithful in the Lord and to the Word which he has given us as the way of life and the hope of salvation through Jesus Christ. Trust in Him. He is a greater help than all the Power of man. May he keep you ever in His love and give you grace and wisdom to do the thing which is right and the best thing in this matter of your relation to the Church and to the powers that rule over us. We should thank the Lord for what privileges have been granted to us by our Government. Let us pray for each other and for all men, that they may be saved and that we may abide faithful in our salvation.

Yours in Him.

Vineland Ont., July 8, 1918.

Mr. C. Lesslie Wilson,
Ontario Registrar, M. S. A.
Board of Trade Bldg.,
Toronto, Ont.

Dear Sir:-

In my letter to you, dated July 2nd, Inst., a reference was made to the "Statement of Faith" of the Mennonite Church regarding the article of War. Please find herewith enclosed a copy of the said statement.

This Statement, with a petition from the the representatives of the Mennonite and Amish Mennonite Churches of Ontario, and representing their congregations in Canada, was handed to the Government at Ottawa. Trusting that it may be of some value to you in understanding our position, I am,

Most respectfully Yours,

Markham, Ont. July 2nd 1918

S. Z. Coffman, Vineland, Ont.

Dear brother, Greetings. In an interview with Mr. H. E. Mackell, Asst Registrar on the 19th ult. he stated that Mennonites need not register. On the 3rd inst. I asked him to express his opinion in writing. The following is his reply.

^{copy}
Office of Ontario Registrar M. S. G. etc.
Toronto, Ont., July 4, 1918

Mr. L. J. Burkholder Acting Bishop etc.

Dear Sir -

In reply to your letter of the 3rd. I beg to inform you that since our interview on the 19th, we have received instructions from Ottawa that the Ontario Mennonites are in exactly the same position as Trunkers, and are not exceptions to the Act, but must register and claim exemption on conscientious grounds in exactly the same manner as other conscientious objectors. I understand that the Chief Public Representative has written to Bishops of the Mennonite Church in Ontario instructing them that these men who come within Class I of the M. S. G., as now defined will be required to register at once if they have not already done so.

Signed. C Leslie Nelson, Ontario Registrar
per H. Eric Mackell Asst. Registrar.

From the above it appears that Ottawa entirely ignores our position as non-resistant Church. We fear we have what Messrs Best & Reichel have seen for us. We trust sister Ella is better again. L. W. has been sick with "heaves" for a week. As ever L. J. Burkholder

Markham Ont. July 8th 1913

Ontario Registrar
Toronto

Dear Sir

I am complying with your instructions of the 4th inst. Following are the names of our young men of 19 to 20 yrs. They have not registered early because in an interview with the Assistant Registrar on the 19th ult. it was stated that Mennonites need not register under the M. S. A.

Leslie L. Vandenham	Markham Ont.	May 28 1899
Ralph B. Shank	Markham Road 2	June 23 1899
Louis Grew	Markham	Aug 7 1898
Peter J. Smith	Pickering, Ont 2	Oct 14 1898
A. Lewis Kelly	Markham Road 2	Nov 15 1897
Wm. T. Woakes	Markham Road 2	Nov 14 1897

I have received no instructions from a Chief Public Representative re registration.

I trust the above will be satisfactory. I shall be glad to render any further service consistent with our faith.

Yours truly,

L. J. Burt Walder

Acting, Bishop of Mennonite Church