

Col Bickford  
College St  
O C 1<sup>st</sup> Depot Battalion  
Toronto

THE CONFLICTING POINTS BETWEEN THE FAITH OF NON-RESISTANT  
CHURCHES AND THE M. S. A.

1. If any service whatsoever is required of Non-Resistant Believers, members of such organized Churches, it nullifies the pledges of Religious liberty on the first actual occasion that privileges of exemption could have been effective.
2. In following the advice of the Government, in response to the first call, under the M. S. A. our young men were obliged to register under Clause 8 of the Exemptions, inserting the name of the "Tunker" or "Mennonite" Church, or Amish Mennonite Church, thus describing the "tenets of Faith" as opposed to "Combatant" service. This incorrectly expressed our faith; but no provisions were made under the exemption regulations for correctly stating our faith and the ground of our claims, as opposed to all forms of Military service, whether "Combatant" or "Non-Combatant". Hence the Local and District Tribunals could not do otherwise than follow the directions of the Act and "exempt" from Combatant service only" and our brethren not totally exempted are subject to Military Service.
3. Our brethren have not been uniformly dealt with by the various Exemption Tribunals. Some ~~of~~ have been exempted as ~~foreigners~~, some as necessary at home, others until certain classes or categories are called and others from combative service. Some few in the East and a number in the West are exempted as Mennonites. The Military Service Council and other heads of Government Departments have almost uniformly declared that the Mennonites and Tunkers are excepted from the Military Service Act and "have no duty to perform thereunder". Our appeals to the various Tribunals, under the decision of Military Service Council, have not met with any success in securing release from Military Service and our young men are still held, contrary to their faith, as soldiers, on leave of absence, without pay, and under the Military authority of the Country.
4. Our people have esteemed the interpretation of the Exceptions to the Act, of those coming under the Order-in-Council of Aug. 13, 1873, as including all Quakers, Tunkers and Mennonites whose liberties under the Statutes of Canada had been continued to them for many years, and whose liberties were cited to the Mennonites, who proposed immigrating to Canada in order to confirm their confidence in the continuance of their faith in this land. We could not believe that the Canadian Government had annulled in any degree these religious liberties and immunities which our forefathers enjoyed.

EXEMPTION FROM MILITARY SERVICE.

1. No Medical examination need before applying for exemption.
2. More than one claim made be made on same exemption form. If claims are just mark them on application form. Insert name of your church.
3. Fathers who cannot vote in this election may claim exemption for son who is under 21, at election time, if son is not member of church.
4. Parents may make claim for exemption of any son needed at home.
5. Make claim for exemption at post office, on blank form provided by Post Master, before November 8, or soon as possible.
6. Certificate of Church membership is not needed in making application for exemption; be provided with certificate when called before Exemption Tribunal on or after November 8.
7. Remember that our Church forbids its members engaging in any form of service under the military arm of the Government, and do not sign papers requiring such service before knowing what the decision of the Government is concerning the standing of the Church on this point. Before giving any consent for non-combatant service you may appeal to a higher tribunal.
8. In case your claim for exemption is disallowed you have a higher Tribunal to which you may appeal.
9. Do not promise orally or in any other way to consider hospital transport or other service in the army. Our Church is unitedly opposed to all service in the army.
10. Take with you before the Exemption Tribunal evidence in support of all your claims for exemption.

Some matters are yet before the Government for decision. Pray for the cause that is dear to our hearts and spiritual welfare.

## To The Various Branches Of The Mennonite, and Tunker Churches in Canada

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these"

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The Non-Resistant Relief Organization was formed in the Month of January, 1918, having for its object the raising of a MEMORIAL FUND, to present to the Government of Canada in recognition of our religious liberty, and for the purpose of relief work made necessary by the present war conditions. The fund is to be used by the Government in whatever way may be found necessary while at the same time using it in harmony with the faith and practice of the religious bodies constituting this organization.

The objects of the organization have considerably delayed on account of uncertainties which obtained relative to the legal status of the churches represented in this movement, under the Military Service Act of 1917, and the Order in Council of April 20th, 1918.

After considerable enquiry and effort these uncertainties have in a large measure been cleared up, and with gratitude to our God, and grateful appreciation to the Government of Canada, we rejoice to be able to say, that we, as a Non-resistant people, shall be permitted the continuance of the privilege of honoring God, and His Gospel principles, and our personal convictions, by being relieved of the duty of taking up arms, and engaging in military service.

While many of our people have been sharing in the works of charity and relief of suffering, giving generously of their labor and means, as far as consistent with their peace-loving principles, the movement in connection with this organization is a special effort, and affords a favorable opportunity to do more work along the same lines, and to share more fully in the privations and burdens of our fellow citizens, and to support the charitable work of the Government.

The Government of Canada has been earnestly solicited to devise for us some plan by which such a donation could be expended for the benefit of the worthy poor, either at home or abroad who are in actual need of relief (preferably widows and orphans) and who are not pledged to support, as war dependants.

In view of the foregoing facts, this letter comes as an earnest appeal to every member of the churches forming this organization. for a generous financial contribution, in the name of Him whose word says, "But to communicate, and to do good forget not, for with such sacrifice the Lord is well pleased". We should show in a very practical manner, that while we as a people are averse to the bearing of arms, or engaging in carnal warfare in any form, we nevertheless are not a selfish, and unsympathetic people in the matter of our duty towards suffering humanity, fulfilling such duties in harmony with the principles which we profess and by which we live.

We therefore bespeak for all of our people, a large heartedness, and a liberal response to this most worthy cause.

The methods of raising this fund will be left to the choice of each individual congregation, or district, but care should be taken that any method chosen is in full keeping with the principles and practices of those churches, and that it may be done in as private a manner as possible.

Formulated by—D. W. Heise, S. F. Coffman

Approved by— S. Goudie

Executive Committee - I. J. Burkholder, S. Goudie, D. W. Heise, Thos. Reesor, C. Gasho.

P. S.—All contributons should be forwarded to Eld. Thomas Reesor, Treasurer, R. R. No. 2., Pickering, Ont.

CENTAR GROVE, ..... 1

M.....

IN ACCOUNT WITH **THOS. REESOR**

DEALER IN VARIOUS KINDS OF FEED  
**Dried Brewers' Grains and Malted Corn**  
**Meal a Specialty.**

TERMS CASH.

INTEREST CHARGED ON ALL OVERDUE ACCOUNTS

Apr	Ottawa trip	13	90
	expenses in Ottawa		30
"	<del>Waterloo trip</del>		
	4 Waterloo trips		
	@ 450	18	00
	3 tel calls		
	Waterloo	1	40
	Hotel Toronto	1	00
	Pd A & Wilson		
	copy Statutes	35	00
		<u>69</u>	<u>60</u>
	Postage		40
		<u>70</u>	<u>00</u>

\$15.00

Eld John Nishi

Hagersville

\$3.50

out

Bish John Reichard

Fordwich

4.10

out

Eld Simon Cober

Kitchiner

out

\$21.00

Bish John Sider

Per Mrs Chaston

Marshville out

\$26.50

Bis Geo Baker

Per Isaac Swalm

Bellows out

\$39.06

Bish Peter Steadley

Stauffville out

Per A. W. Heise

Telephone	—	.70
" "	—	.40
" "	—	.20

3 trips to Toronto

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5.10

Telephone	—	.75
" "	—	.70

Postage		.60
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" .. Stationery		1.10
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" " " "		.95
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" " " "		.72
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\$1.122

S. Goudie

Paid in full

## Freeman Kitterhouse's

expenses	
Jan 1, Trip to Vinland + phone message	\$ 75
Toronto + return street car	\$ 35
Meals	35
Postage	75
Livery	1 50
2 Meals	25
Street car	1 00
	\$ 5
	<hr/>
	13 10

Received Payment  
of  
Freeman Kitterhouse



I have not heard much as to the result of our meeting in connection with the government loan but from the scraps of information gathered it seems to be somewhat two-sided. It may seem absurd to you that I should take an interest in this affair but I have strong reasons to do so. Candidly speaking I believe it to be one of our last opportunities to win favour in the eyes of the Government.

The county representative was in the office to-day and said that when he had sent in his report last night (the first day of the loan) headquarters inquired what per cent of the loan was from Mennonites. A <sup>were</sup> cable from Montreal wanted to know whether the Mennonites are taking advantage of the offer made by the Minister of Finance. I have reason to fear that our cause is in grave jeopardy at Ottawa. (over)

I am sorry that I cannot be present at your meeting and have not even seen Urias about it. Owing <sup>to</sup> the epidemic, we naturally would not bring our wives along and as that was the intention we are postponing our visit for some future time.

I hope you are not turning down the head tax proposition as that seems to be one of the very few things that is winning the general favor of our people.

An account of the doings at the meeting would be much appreciated.

yours truly  
W M Bearinger

COPY

Rev. Samuel Baker,

Gormley, Ont.

At your request I have endeavored to ascertain the earliest laws exempting Mennoites, Dunkers and Quakers from Military Service. The earliest one I can find is one passed in the 48 th year of George III. 1808. I enclose three copies of section 27 which is the only section affecting the matter. This section was amended by an act passed in the 50 th year of George III, Chap.XI, which gives the same privileges to the Minor children of Mennonites and Dunkers. The law at present in force exempting from Military Service is contained in the Revised Statutes of Canada Chap. 4C.

This I think covers all you desire to know.

Yours truly,

W. N. Miller

" Murlock, Tilt, Miller & Caruthers "

Solicitors.

841.—4-5 Vic., Chap. 2.—That the persons called Quakers, Menonists or Tunkers shall not be compelled to serve in the Militia within that portion of this Province which formerly constituted the Province of Upper Canada but every person who shall profess to be one of the people called Quakers, Menonists or Tunkers and shall, if required, produce a certificate thereof signed by the Clerk, Pastor, Minister or Leader of the Meeting of the Society to which he shall belong, shall be excused and exempted from serving in said Militia. (Here follows provision for giving names, etc., to assessor and for the payment of ten shillings in times of peace and five pounds in times of invasion, etc., and providing for assessment as Quakers, Menonists or Tunkers. The money was apparently to be spent on roads.)

1846.—9 Vic., Chap. 28, Sec. 31.—(This Section was repealed by the following Act.)

1849.—12 Vic., Chap. 88.—Whereas it is expedient to repeal so much of the Act regulating the Militia of this Province as obliges Quakers, Menonists and Tunkers to enroll themselves in any Company Division in Upper Canada and to revive the Act herein mentioned relating to the payment to be made by such persons in lieu of serving in the Militia; Be it therefore enacted

that the 31st Section of 9 Victoria, Chapter 28, and as much of the said Act as repeals the Act of 4 and 5 Victoria, Chapter 2, and so much of the said first-mentioned Act as may be inconsistent with or repugnant to this Act or to the Act secondly mentioned, shall be and are hereby repealed in so far as regards that portion of this Province which formerly constituted the Province of Upper Canada, and that the Act secondly mentioned shall be and is hereby revived and shall be reckoned in force and shall apply to the Militia Law now in force and to the Militia thereby organized and the things to be done under the same as fully and effectually as if the provisions thereof were herein repeated and re-enacted.

15.—18 Vic., Chap. 77, Sec. 7.—All persons bearing certificates from the Society of Quakers, Menonists and Tunkers; or any inhabitant of this Province, of any religious denomination, otherwise subject to military duty in time of peace but who from the doctrines of his religion shall be adverse to bearing arms, and shall refuse personal military service, shall be exempted therefrom. (Here follows a provision requiring an affidavit to be filed a month before exemption claimed.)

—Being the consolidated Statutes of Upper Canada, Chapter 35, Section 73, repeats the law of 1855.

The Confederation of the Dominion of Canada having been formed in 1867 the Militia Act was revised as follows:

—31 Vic., Chap. 40, Sec. 17.—Any person bearing a certificate from the Society of Quakers, Menonists or Tunkers or any inhabitant of Canada of any religious denomination, otherwise subject to military duty, but who, from the doctrines of his religion, is adverse to bearing arms and refuses personal military service, shall be exempt from such service when balloted in time of peace, or war, upon such conditions and under such regulations as the Governor-in-Council may from time to time prescribe. (Exemption to be claimed with affidavit as prescribed in the Act.) This clause was passed practically verbatim in 46 Vic. and Rev. Statutes of Canada, 1886, Chap. 1, Sec. 26.

STATUTES NOW IN FORCE.

Militia Act.—Revised Statutes of Canada, 1906, Cap. Sec. 10. All male inhabitants of Canada, of the age of eighteen and upwards and under sixty, not exempt or disqualified by law, and being British subjects, shall be liable to serve in the Militia; Provided that the Governor-General may require all the male inhabitants of Canada, capable of bearing arms, to receive in the case of a levee en masse.

—The following persons only shall be exempt from liability to service in the Militia:—(Amongst others) persons who, from the doctrines of their religion, are adverse to bearing arms or rendering personal military service under such conditions as are prescribed.

ss. 2.—No person shall be entitled to exemption unless he has, at least one month before he claims exemption, filed with the Commanding Officer within the limits whereof he resides, his affidavit, made before some Justice of the Peace of the facts on which he claims.

Sec. 69.—The Governor-in-Council may place the Militia, or any part thereof, on active service anywhere in Canada, and also beyond Canada, for the defence thereof, at any time when it appears advisable so to do by reason of emergency.

THE MILITARY SERVICE ACT, 1917.

Among the grounds of exemption allowed is:

Sec. 11, ss. (f)—That he conscientiously objects to the undertaking of combatant service and is prohibited from so doing by the tenets and articles of faith, in effect on the 6th day of July, 1917, of any organized religious denomination existing and well organized in Canada at such date, and to which he in good faith belongs; and if any of the grounds of such application be established, a certificate of exemption shall be granted to such man.

(2) (a) A certificate may be conditional as to the time or otherwise, and, if granted solely on conscientious grounds, shall state that such exemption is from combatant service only.

To this Military Service Act, 1917, a schedule of exceptions is attached, among which is: 7. Those persons exempted from Military Service by Order-in-Council of December 6th, 1898. Mennonites might possibly come under Exception 7 but I could not find any copy of these Orders-in-Council or any reference to them except in this Act in the library at Osgoode Hall, not being published in the Canada Gazette around the dates mentioned.

MEMORANDUM OF EXTRACTS FROM DOMINION GOVERNMENT RECORDS

which appear to relate to Section 7 of the Military Service Act 1917.

1868.—That a sub-section of Section 17 of the Act, 31 Victoria, Chapter 40, is as follows: Any person bearing a Certificate from the Society of Quakers, Menonists or Tunkers, or any inhabitant of Canada of any religious denomination, otherwise subject to military duty, but who, from the doctrines of his religion, is adverse to bearing arms and refuses personal military service shall be exempt from such service when balloted in time of peace, or war, upon such conditions and under such regulations as the Governor-in-Council may from time to time prescribe. That under this Section all the persons above mentioned, and the Mennonites are expressly included, are absolutely free and exempted by the law of Canada from military duty or service, either in time of peace or war. That the intention of the Act in conferring upon the Governor-General-in-Council the power of making conditions and regulations was to enable the Government to provide, if necessary, for the registration of the exempted persons in such a manner as to prevent persons belonging to any other denomination than those specified in the section of the Act above quoted from avoiding military duty under false pretences. That the constitution does not confer upon the Governor-General-in-Council any power to over-ride or set aside, under any circumstances, the plain meaning of Statute law, and he recommends that this explanation be conveyed to the Mennonites in Russia.

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

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

To the Honourable The Minister of the Interior.  
Department of Agriculture,  
Immigration Branch,  
Ottawa, July 23, 1873.

Gentlemen:  
I have the honor under the instructions of the Hon. The Minister of Agriculture, to state to you in reply to your letter of this day's date the following facts relating to advantages offered to settlers and to the immunities to Mennonites, which are established by the Statute Law of Canada and by orders of His Excellency the Governor-General-in-Council, for the information of German Mennonites having intention to emigrate to Canada via Hamburg. An entire exemption from military service is by law and Order-in-Council granted to the denomination of Christians called Mennonites.

\$ 35 <sup>00</sup>/<sub>100</sub>

Markham, Ont. 7<sup>th</sup> May 1917

Received from Mrs Reesor by  
the sum of Thirty five <sup>x1</sup>/<sub>100</sub> Dollars

in full of compiling statement of Laws  
relating to Mennonites in Canada copies of  
No.                                            
                         
                         
                       



# The Military Service Act

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## ITS MEANING AND EFFECT

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**T**HE MILITARY SERVICE ACT, 1917, received the Royal assent on the 29th day of August, and is now the Law of the land.

It has therefore become the duty of the Government to enforce this law impartially, promptly and effectively.

The purpose of the law is to provide much needed reinforcements for our heroic and sorely tried troops fighting in Flanders and in France.

To accomplish this end, Parliament has imposed upon the Civil administration the burden of carrying the Act into operation.

The selection of the men and the dealing with questions of exemption are in the hands of the Civil Authorities. It is not until the men are actually called to colours that the Militia Department intervenes.

The reinforcements to be raised are limited to 100,000 men, and those from whom they may be raised are divided into six classes, which are to be called out in the order in which they are named.

The first class comprises men not in the schedule of exceptions who, on the 6th July, 1917, were unmarried or

widowers without children, are at least 20 years of age and were born on or since 1st January, 1883. The second class includes married men or widowers with child or children between the same ages. The four remaining classes comprise older men, the third and fifth classes being unmarried men and widowers without children, and the fourth and sixth classes being married men and widowers with a child or children.

It is the intention of the Government to call out the first class by Proclamation to be issued as soon as possible. It is hoped that after all Claims for Exemption have been dealt with, this class will supply a sufficient number of men, who are physically fit, to furnish the reinforcements which the national honour and our duty to those at the Front demand, and that it may not be necessary to call out any of the subsequent classes.

The Proclamation calling out the first class will specify a date on or before which the members of the class must report for service, or claim exemption on one or other of the grounds specified in the Statute.

Forms on which Reports for Service or Claims for Exemption are to be made, will be placed in the hands of all Postmasters throughout the Dominion and it will be the duty of every member of the class in question to fill in one or other of these forms and submit it in the prescribed manner on or before the named day.

The grounds on which exemption may be claimed (which are similar to the grounds recognized in Great Britain and the United States) are as follows:

- (a) That it is expedient in the national interest that the man should, instead of being employed in Military Service, be engaged in other work in which he is habitually engaged.
- (b) That it is expedient in the national interest that the man should, instead of being employed in Military Service, be engaged in other work in which he wishes to be engaged and for which he has special qualifications.

- (c) That it is expedient in the national interest that, instead of being employed in Military Service, he should continue to be educated or trained for any work for which he is then being educated and trained.
- (d) That serious hardship would ensue, if the man were placed on active service, owing to his exceptional financial or business obligations or domestic position.
- (e) Ill health or infirmity.
- (f) That he conscientiously objects to the undertaking of combatant service and is prohibited from doing so by tenets and articles of faith, in effect on the sixth day of July, 1917, of any organized religious denomination existing and well recognized in Canada at such date, and to which he in good faith belongs.

No Claim for Exemption should be put forward unless one or other of these grounds in fact exists, and no loyal citizen should assist in, or allow himself to be made a party to, any Claim for Exemption unless thoroughly satisfied that it is made in good faith.

All Claims for Exemption will be disposed of by local tribunals established for the purpose to the number 1,250 and upwards throughout the Country.

Each of these tribunals consists of two members, one of whom is appointed by the County Court or District Judge, and the other by a Board of Selection established by the House of Commons and the Senate and nominated half by the Prime Minister and half by the Leader of the Opposition. These tribunals are entirely non-partizan and non-military and their local knowledge should enable them to deal intelligently and justly with the claims that come before them.

Provincial appellate tribunals and a central appellate tribunal for the whole of Canada are also provided to secure uniformity of interpretation in the application of the law.

No man will be required actually to join the colours till after a date which will be fixed by the Proclamation sufficiently late to permit the local tribunals to dispose of



most, if not all, applications for exemption which may come before them.

No one will gain any advantage by delay in Reporting for Service, nor will prompt Report result in any disadvantage.

Medical Boards are now in session at suitable centres throughout the Dominion. Any member of the first class, desirous of ascertaining immediately whether he is physically fit for service or not, may attend before any one of such Boards at any time convenient to himself and be examined free of charge. Information as to the time and place of the Sittings of these Boards will be found in the Daily Press. Certificates of physical unfitness issued by these Boards will be accepted by Exemption Tribunals when they sit, without further investigation. Men found physically fit who have not reported for service may nevertheless apply for exemption on any of the prescribed grounds including the ground of ill health or infirmity, if dissatisfied with the conclusion of the Medical Board.

The purpose of this circular is to furnish those affected by the Military Service Act with early information as to its effect and operation. It is not intended to relieve them from the necessity of familiarizing themselves with the provisions of the Proclamation of the Governor-General in Council, which will issue in due course, and will prescribe in detail the procedure above outlined and the consequences of failure to obey the requirements of the law.

The Proclamation in question will be published extensively, but personal notice to those affected will not be possible and they are advised to watch for the appearance of this Proclamation.

**Issued by Military Service Council.**

M.S.A.—18.

Ottawa, September 26th, 1917.

THE LUMBER PLANING MILL CO. LIMITED  
 Successors to  
**BAUMAN & LETSON**

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2-0-0-2  
 11

Elmira, Ont., Nov. 22, 1917.

Rev. Thos. Peeser,  
 Pickering, Ont.

Dear Brother in Faith:

Greetings.

Some time ago I received a copy of a very valuable letter from you, a letter which has served a good purpose in many ways one of them being as a token that you have not forgotten me. I am ashamed of myself that I did not acknowledge the receipt of your letter sooner and will refrain from making any excuses.

I was pleased to note that you take an interest in the vital questions of the day and wish to express my thanks for the copy of the letter sent. It would be a long and interesting story to repeat the strange experiences one has to go through in order to be understood. I have been requested to appear before two Tribunals in behalf of our church and have been invited to appear before the third and I assure you, dear brother, that it is by no means a pleasant pass-time. I have just been requested to inquire into the claims of a member of the other church, who claims exemption in Winnipeg and am making my report this morning.

Dear Brother, while my time is very limited I have another reason for making my letter short. In the latter part of the next week I shall be obliged to be in Toronto on business and as I have not had a holiday for a long time I intend to spend a few days with the hospitable folks in Markham and also expect to have a good chat with you as I am anxious to ascertain your views regarding certain church matters which I fear may be called in question by the government in the near future.

(Please excuse hurry.)

Yours very truly  
 W. M. Beavinger

"Copy"

Elmira, Ont., Nov. 27th, 1915.

Rev. Ezra L. Martin,  
St. Jacobs, Ont.

Dear Brother In Faith:

Greetings.

While your thoughts may be at the present time occupied with other serious affairs prevailing circumstances prompt me to call your attention to a matter which in my opinion is worthy of the deepest consideration.

Possibly you may remember that some time ago the advisability of sending a donation to the government as a token of appreciation and thanks for the liberties which we enjoy was discussed. However it was at that time considered proper to turn the proposition down because of its relation to the war with the intimation that we would do our share in that respect when peace is once more restored.

Personally I was very sorry that the proposition was not accepted and I have since had sincere reason to regret it. Being in close touch with all classes of people it is an easy matter for one to ascertain the spirit that prevails among the people and it is to be lamented that the feeling towards the Mennonites from the outside world in general is gradually lessening in friendliness. This may be considered true to the Scriptures but I can find no foundation in the law of God where man is forbidden to do something towards lessening the spirit of dissent against him as long as such action remains in accordance with the doctrine of Christ.

The many varied complaints that are being constantly brought to one's attention with the never failing proof to back them are disgraceful to the name that we bear and I believe it were well that we should employ prompt measures to right ourselves in the opinion of our neighbors.

During the past three years many different methods were introduced to the people through <sup>which</sup> they could assist the war in its various phases by donating sums of money. The Red Cross and Belgian Relief were considered to be worthy of charity funds from all classes but were not given much attention by the Mennonites in general, and up to the present we have the name of not even having donated anything towards helping the innocent suffering ones across the seas many of whom may be brethren in faith and many of whom may have through their trials and tribulations been drawn nearer to the Throne of the Father than we have ever been.

Then the Military Service Act was passed. The Mennonite realized that the doctrines of his faith were threatened and was prompt in exerting himself to see whether exemption would be granted. Our good government has seen fit to recognize and respect our articles of faith and the writer was quite recently favored with the opportunity in behalf of the church to personally thank Sir Robert Borden, the Prime Minister of Canada, and Mr. Weichel,

our local member, for the favors which their government has granted us.

The fact that we are exempt from combatant service is in itself causing dissatisfaction in the minds of many and the expressions that one hears concerning us suggests that which we perhaps deserve.

The Union Government and its opposition are now before the people and the matter of Conscription is to be fully decided upon in the near future. I have found it to my personal interest to converse with the two opposing candidates in this riding and the vote of the Mennonite was the chief factor in the conversation. In this case one would again warn the Mennonite to exercise the most sound judgment. One party will advise him to stay at home as he has nothing to do with the war, threatening him with the forfeiting of his rights to exemption if he casts his vote. The other will chide him by saying that as long as the Mennonite is exempt all is well. The neighbors of other denominations will appeal to him to exercise his influence in his church and to cast his vote against conscription so that none of the boys will be called upon to spill their life blood in a foreign land. The Lord God commands "Love thy neighbor as thy self" and one wonders whether we can obey that command with a clear conscience by turning a deaf ear to the earnest appeals of that neighbor.

At the present time the country is being canvassed by men who solicit funds for the Victory Loan. The government offers 5½% interest and the Dominion of Canada for security. While the majority of our people refrain from purchasing these bonds there are some Mennonites that are lured by the high rate of interest and the security behind it and they have purchased bonds. While they may be entirely innocent and true in their purpose the impression among the people now is of a nature that is no credit to us. When the opportunity presented itself to give a free offering to the government for the Belgian Relief or Red Cross the Mennonite wanted absolutely nothing to do with the war. He considered it wrong to give any money for that purpose. Now when he has the chance to secure his money at a high rate of interest the purpose for which the funds are loaned are no longer considered.

Dear brother, it is a very sad state of affairs and there must be a means to remedy it. The men who canvass the country consider it in their interests to impress upon the Mennonites that it is their duty to their country to buy these bonds. Each man further impresses the Mennonite that he has been too unconcerned and vigorously reminds him of the fact that he has done absolutely nothing for the government that has been gracious enough to exempt him from combatant service on account of his religious convictions. He is told that he now has the opportunity to repay the government for its kindness to him. The Mennonite is likewise reminded that while he wants nothing to do with the war and knows very little of the state of affairs as they exist from time to time he is perfectly willing to accept all the high prices for his produce that are caused by the war and he is perfectly well posted in any rise in the market that affects his interests.

Some of the reported dealings of some of our

brethren in this connection are disgraceful in every extreme, and I hope that the time may never come when I shall feel it my sincere duty to the welfare of the church to expose the unmanly and unchristian methods that are being employed by such men who wear the plain clothes that have won the universal respect of mankind. It is to be sadly regretted that one has to make mention of such a deplorable fact but the day has come, dear brother, when the greed and cravings for the mighty dollar will no longer be hidden under a plain apparel which is to be the symbol, the light of a religion that is being practised by some and professed by others.

We are well aware of the fact that there are such brethren who are unable to help themselves when confronted by these Victory Loan men. They must admit that they have been blessed with a bountiful harvest, that they are receiving excessively high prices for all that they produce and that they have done nothing by way of a sacrifice for their country. While they would be willing to show their appreciation and good will towards the government of their land they do not consider the purchase of these bonds to be in accordance with their religious belief.

Would it not be a relief to all concerned, would it not clear the Mennonite from the miserly mis-representations that he must bear through the cursed greed of some of his fellow members if he could tell these canvassers that the members of his church are subscribing freely to the church fund which would be organized at once. This fund could be sent directly to the Minister of Finance with the thanks of the Mennonite church and the earnest appeal that it be utilized for charity purposes only as it is our sincere wish that we do not give our money to aid a cause to which we have conscientious objections.

This proposition has been discussed in this office and the general opinion is decidedly in its favor. I have no desire to gain anything as its organizer and am sincere in my belief as to the good results that we will attain. Surely every one will be willing to sacrifice something to retain the good will and appreciation of his fellow men and possibly to win favor in the eyes of God.

There are several means by which the proposition could be at once proceeded with and I think the sooner the better. The clergy should not be called upon to take part in the collections as they have other serious things which demand their attention. The suggestion has been made that four brethren be appointed to canvass the members of the church and explain the situation. This might cause a certain ill feeling but it is to be feared that all people cannot be suited each according to his taste. Another way which would cause less disturbance and perhaps insure better results would be to send out a circular to the members explaining the situation and the cause of the method employed.

It has also been suggested that we appeal to have a certain rate added to our taxes and make the sacrifice in that manner. There are families in our church who are leading a righteous life but who are struggling for an existence and it is not the intention to approach those under such conditions; whereas if our donation were applied on the taxes it would affect them more

than the richer people. However if such is the opinion of the majority no time will be lost to present the matter to the proper authorities and have a certain rate affixed to the taxes. It is also doubtful if by so doing we would have the right to state in what manner the funds thus obtained should be utilized.

Now, dear brother, you may think it aggressive on my part to bring this matter up for your consideration but I assure you that I have serious and just reasons for doing so, reasons which I would for the time being rather not see explained on paper. I am willing to do my part towards ~~towards~~ introducing the proposition and carrying it through and will co-operate with any men that are appointed or in any way which is deemed advisable and has the sanction of our clergy.

I sincerely trust that you will not disregard so important an issue as I earnestly believe that it will serve as a great benefit to the welfare of our brethren. It is true that such a matter was never brought up for consideration before but we are living in a time such as God's sun has never shone upon and it is evident that we poor mortals are perhaps standing upon the threshold of a future such as this world has never seen. Let us learn from the past and act in the present to prepare for that future.

I earnestly hope that the object of this letter will not be treated with indifference and may God's blessing be upon the results of its appeal.

Yours truly,

Military Service Act.

Vineland Ont., Nov. 29, 1917.

Bishops and Brethren:- Greeting.

Owing to the fact that a number of the Exemption Tribunals have not been giving recognition to the claims of our brethren for exemption on the grounds that they are excluded from the operation of the Military Service Act, and since their rulings have not been uniform, it is advisable that every claim that has not been honored with entire exemption should be at once appealed to a higher tribunal. Where exemptions has been granted conditionally for other than conscientious reasons the claim should also be appealed to accord with the regulations that Mennonites are excluded from the Act, and hence not subject to the conditions prescribed by the Local Tribunals.

The Military Service Council at Ottawa has specially considered the position of the Mennonites in Ontario and therefore we have a right to claim our privileges of entire freedom from the Military Service Act under the ruling which they have given. Their decision was made upon the appeals of Mennonites in Ontario, and ~~such~~ our claims may be made accordingly

Each Bishop and each Minister who has charge of a congregation in which there are brethren who have claimed exemption should see that these claims are made for all who are effected by decisions of the Local Tribunals.

Praying for our young brethren and for our authorities that we may have our peace and righteousness secured to us, I am,

Yours in behalf of the Committee,

S.F.Coffma.

Military Service Act.

Vineland Ont., December 7, 1917.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

S.F. Coffman.



Military Service Act.

Vineland Ont., December 7, 1917.

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

Sir,

With reference to the action of the Local Exemption Tribunals who have had to deal with the exemption claims made by young men who are members of the Mennonite Church and of other Churches of kindred faith, permit me to state to your self and to the Government that there has not been a uniform consideration of the said claims for total exemption from all military service, which privilege they have had just reason to claim as a result of the appeal made by a Committee of our Church to the Government and the decision rendered thereupon by the Military Service Council, which Council we have addressed concerning this matter, enclosing copies of our former correspondence with the Government.

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

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Trusting that this matter may receive your most earnest consideration and that of the Departments concerned,

I am, Sir,

On behalf of the Mennonite and Amish Mennonite Committee,  
Most respectfully,

S. F. Coffman.

Brethren:-Greeting. This note is appended to save space and labor. Our letter of thanks to the Prime Minister was withheld until these matters of the appeal of the cases of some of our brethren has been settled. We are still grateful to the Government and feel that there will be difficulty on account of these appeal cases since the Department of Justice has acted on the standing of Mennonites in Ontario and has said that they and all other non-resistant bodies are not under the Military Service act, and has been thus interpreting the law to all who have applied for such information. Let us thank God and hold our confidence and steadfastness of faith.

Humbly yours in faith, S. F. C.

Elmira Planing Mill Co. Limited  
BAUMAN & LETSON

PLANING MILL, and Dealers in  
ROUGH LUMBER

WON

11

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

Rev. Thos. Reesor,

Pickering, Ont.

Dear Brother in Faith:

Greetings.

The letter which your daughter forwarded was received and its contents are very interesting as the letter has arrived just at the proper time. Brother Cressman was in the office this morning and we took up the donation question and the respective views that were held by the different parties I had met during my recent trip.

It seems that this denomination is the most difficult to approach on such matters for reasons the depths of which I cannot fathom. The clergy appears to be very anxious to ascertain whether we are in reality exempt from every form of military service and, as far as I know, the church would be willing to pay a vast sum of money to the government if we could receive the assurance from the proper source that our conscientious objections would be recognized by the Crown.

I am enclosing a copy of a letter forwarded to Rev. S. F. Coffman and would be very much obliged to you if you could give us the opinion of the clergy in your community regarding the proposition. A copy of this letter is also being sent to Freeman Rittenhouse with the same request and an early answer in both cases will be very much appreciated as I believe that it were well that some action should be taken.

I am thankful to say that I arrived home safely although the storm had not ceased. I was too tired to attend church services on Sunday and my absence seemed very acceptable for they took advantage of it to publish my name in such a way that I believe some people are actually expecting me to get married.

So with a matrimonial proposition confronting me, with the church affair and the cares and worries of the business, I happen to have plenty of pass time and am working after hours against the doctor's rules. I thank you for sending a copy of Rev. Coffman's letter as it gives me an idea as to the character of its writer.

Accept my best wishes and kindest regards for you and the rest of the family, especially Martha, who I hope may soon be well again.

Yours very truly,

M. M. Bearinger

*"Copy"*

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

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

Dear Friend:

Greetings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Thos. Reesor —*

*The above is a <sup>part</sup> copy of the letter forwarded to Rev. Coffman explaining the situation as it stands here.*

*Anna Lynn retyped this letter because of the poor reproduction  
with photo copy - 11-8-1977 - A.B.H.*

Dec.  
Elmira, Ont., 13th, 1917

Rev. S. F. Coffman,

Vineland, Ont.

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

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Thos. Reesor-

The above is a part copy of the letter forwarded to Rev. Coffman explaining the situation as it stands here.

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

PLANING MILL, and Dealers in  
ROUGH LUMBER

NOV  
11

Elmira, Ont., Dec. 13th 1917.

Rev. Thos. Reesor,  
Pickering, Ont.

Dear Brother In Faith:

Your last letter has just arrived as I was about to mail this and I cannot help but make a few remarks concerning it. I fear that the proposition contained in the letter to Rev. Coffman may be rather ill-timed since I learn of the move that has been made in your locality but I am forwarding it never-the-less. It seems to me that the attempt to have the promise renewed has already been made and if it has it is all the more necessary that we should at once proceed with the proposition now under way.

I am glad that you got your visitors home and hope that they were quite welcome when they got there.

Yours truly,

*N. M. Bearinger.*

The Elmira Planing Mill Co. Limited  
Successors to  
**BAUMAN & LETSON**

PLANING MILL, and Dealers in  
ROUGH-LUMBER

1200  
M

Elmira, Ont., Dec. 18, 1917.

Rev. Thos. Reesor,  
Pickering, Ont.  
Dear Brother in Faith:

It is a great pleasure to be able to invent excuses so as to constantly correspond with you. I have taken the machine home to my boarding house tonight as I have several letters to write and I will also take time to answer yours.

In reference to that lumber proposition I believe that the prospects are good but would like to know under what conditions the lumber could be purchased. Owing to the scarcity of labor and other reasons we could not think of undertaking to get the lumber out ourselves as we are unable to secure help to handle the lumber in our northern limits. If the lumber could be bought in the pile we would be glad to make an offer but could not undertake to mill it ourselves. I would consider it a favor if you could give me more information as to the conditions of sale.

The donation proposition has not been changed as far as I know although the people manifest a keen interest in it and I am doing all I can to bring it to the attention of the brethren. In a long letter to me Rev. Coffman referred to the different agencies of the church through which charitable work may be accomplished. In my reply I am drawing his attention to the fact that such organizations do not exist in our branch of the church and am urging that immediate action be taken.

Rev. Coffman also referred to the meeting which you mentioned in your letter and which is to be held in the near future. I have informed him that I should be glad to be present at such a meeting where this important issue is being discussed and will try and make arrangements to come if given ample notice as to the date and place of same. However if it should happen to be on Dec. 26th I could not be there as there is another important occasion in store for me on that date and on Jan. 8th we expect to move into our home where we hope to be able to greet you as our guest when you happen to call on the people of this vicinity.

Accept my sincere thanks for your good wishes and my best regards to the family and friends.

Yours very truly,

M. M. Bearinger.

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

Vineland Ont., January 31, 1918

Honourable Sir:-

The most gracious consideration which has always characterized the Government of Canada in its attitude toward its Christian population whose tenets of faith prohibit their taking part in active military service in time of war, or encouraging any military interests in time of peace, and which similar spirit has characterized the present Government during these exceptional times and under the exceptional measures enacted for the present stress of times, has appealed to the hearts of many whose religious interests have been thus guarded. They would express their most profound gratitude for such favors and desire in some special manner to manifest their thankfulness for the enjoyment of the priceless benefits of religious liberty.

With this in view, a number of the non-resistant bodies of Canada have jointly undertaken to show their gratitude to the Government and their interests in the welfare of their fellow-citizens, as well as to undertake share the burdens of suffering humanity thruout the world, by organizing in the manner and for the purposes herein stated.

"Whereas, We, as Mennonites and Tunkers, whose tenets of faith forbid engaging in any form of military service in time of peace or war, desirous to help in bearing the burdens due to the conditions of war, Therefore,

"Resolved, That we, The Non-resistant Relief Organization, recommend that a generous fund be raised among the Churches interested, which shall be donated to the Government as a memorial of appreciation for the privilege of religious liberty, and our freedom from military service; which fund shall be used for relief and charitable purposes; and, that a Committee be appointed which shall interview the Government for suggestions as to the disposal of the said donation according to our faith.

"We further recommend that we encourage a continued support of relief and charitable work during the continuance of the war, and so long thereafter as deemed advisable by this Organization.

We trust, Sir Robert, that this movement may meet with the approval of your Government and submit to your judgment the matter of conferring with you, or with such members of the Government whom you may suggest, regarding the purposes of this Organization, and shall await your pleasure and bidding.

We have the privilege to be,

Sir,

Most gratefully and humbly,

The Committee,

- L. J. Burkholder, Markham, Ont.
- S. F. Coffman, Vineland Ont.
- S. Goudie, Stouffville Ont.
- D. W. Heize, Gormley, Ont.
- Thos. Reesor, Pickering Ont.
- C. Cascho, Baden, Ont.

The Committee.

*L. J. Burkholder*  
Chairman,  
*S. F. Coffman*, Secretary.

*Sent for your approval -  
notify Chairman.*

COPY.

Vineland Ont., February 20, 1918.

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

Honourable Sir:-

The most gracious consideration which has always characterized the Government of Canada in its attitude towards its population whose tenets of faith prohibit their taking part in any form of military service either in time of peace or war, and which similar spirit has characterized the present Government during these exceptional times and under the exceptional measures enacted for the present stress of times, has appealed to the hearts of many whose religious interests have been thus guarded. They express their most profound gratitude for such favors, and desire to manifest in one practical manner their thankfulness for the enjoyment of the priceless benefits of religious liberty.

With this in view, a number of the non-resistant bodies of Canada have jointly undertaken, by forming themselves into an organization known as "THE NON-RESISTANT RELIEF ORGANIZATION," to show their gratitude to the Government and their interest in the welfare of their fellow-citizens, as well as to share the burden of suffering humanity throught the world. The manner and purpose of the organization, as stated in a resolution, is as follows:-

"Whereas, We, as Mennonites and Tunkers, whose tenets of faith forbid  
"engaging in any form of military service in time of peace or war, are de-  
"sirous to help in bearing the burdens occasioned by the war conditions,  
"Therefore, Resolved, That We, The Non-Resistant Relief Organization,  
"recommend that a generous fund be raised among the Churches interested  
"which shall be donated to the Government as a memorial of appreciation for  
"the privilege of religious liberty and our freedom from military service  
"in any form, which fund shall be used for relief and charitable purposes  
"only."

"We further recommend that we encourage a continued support of relief  
"and charitable work during the continuance of the war and so long there-  
"after as may be deemed advisable by this Organization."

We trust, Sir Robert, that this movement may meet with your approval and that of your Government, and that the following solicitation and request may be taken into your serious consideration:- That, a Committee having been appointed to interview the Government with regard to the work of the Organization, the undersigned, Secretary of the Committee, has been instructed to communicate with the Government or its representatives with the object of receiving suggestions or learning the proper channels by which or thru which the objects and purposes of this Organization may be carried into effect according to the tenets of faith of the religious bodies which it represents, and we shall await your pleasure and bidding.

I am,

Honourable Sir,

Yours most respectfully and humbly,

S. F. G. *[Signature]*  
Secretary.

*Draft of letter sent to Chairman  
for approval and to be forwarded*



Elmira, Ont., Feb. 25th, 1918.

Rev. Thos. Reesor,

Pickering, Ont.

Dear Brother In Faith:

Peace.

Since I have not heard from you for some time I thought that perhaps a letter would not be out of order.

I had a chat with Bro. Cressman today and learned some rather favorable news. Some time ago I sent out to several different parties copies of the minutes of our meeting held at Kitchener and it seems that they have created a different feeling among the brethren. According to Bro. Cressman's assertions I would not be surprised if the proposition were proceeded with as he said it is winning general favor although there are some who strenuously oppose it.

I would appreciate any information from you as to the success of the committees and the results of the interview with the government. Encouraging reports along this line would enable me to further the proposition and would be the cause of gaining more interest from the brethren in this community.

There are ten more copies of the above mentioned minutes on the desk before me and I want to mail them to-night adding a short note by way of explanation to each.

I will write again in the near future and will keep you posted as to the way the proposition is being handled and the reception it will receive.

An early answer from you will be appreciated as the information I hope it will contain will assist greatly to get the people more interested.

My sincerest good wishes to you and all inquiring friends and may God's richest blessings be your daily portion.

Yours very truly,

*M. M. Bearinger*

Greetings to you and the family from the wife and myself.

Mt Joy Mar 11/18

Mr Thos Reesor

Pickering

Dear Bro in the Lord,

May the good Lord Bless you in  
your work for the Master.

I suppose you think I am slow in  
returning these papers. I hope you will  
pardon me. I have been making good  
use of them.

Well it is hard work to get a correct  
decision for our boys. The Appeal Court  
try to evade the decision. However  
we are pressing the matter.

Say did you get any thing more perfectly  
relative to the past Statutes. You thought  
the lawyer might draw up some thing  
more. If so let me hear from you,  
I would like a copy of the same.

Yours in Christ

C. N. Good

P.S.

Will be here the next Monday, with Bro Mr  
Bricker.