

## CHAPTER VII

### BEHIND THE FRONT

---

FROM THE BATTLEFIELDS of France we turn our attention back to Canada and the United Kingdom to consider briefly some of the major administrative problems which had arisen during the course of the war thus far. First we shall look at the question of the administration and control of Canada's overseas forces in the United Kingdom.

#### **Divided Command in the United Kingdom**

We have already noted (above, p. 8) that at the outbreak of war the Canadian Militia was being administered by a Minister presiding over a Militia Council of six members, whose functions, however, were merely advisory. There could be little effective coordinated planning, particularly under a Minister like Colonel Sam Hughes, who virtually ignored the other members of the Council, in whose abilities he appeared to place little confidence.\* When war came, no consideration had been given to providing for the administration of a large expeditionary force overseas - indeed the Council's pre-war deliberations towards such an emergency had done no more than set up machinery for mobilization, and this had been discarded by the Minister. To meet a situation without parallel in the history of the Militia it became necessary to resort to improvisation on a large scale. This was to give ample scope to a Minister whose terms of reference allowed him to act without consulting the Militia Council. One restriction was speedily removed. In peacetime, official correspondence between the Canadian and British Governments on military (as on other) matters had been carried on through the Governor General. Now on 10 August 1914 the Secretary of State for the Colonies authorized a direct channel of communication between the Minister of Militia and the Army Council.<sup>1</sup>

We have seen that from the time of the First Canadian Contingent's arrival in the United Kingdom until the 1st Division left for France in February 1915 responsibility for the command and administration of the Canadian troops in Britain rested with Lieut.-General Alderson. In this Alderson was succeeded

\* Witness his shipping the Adjutant General, Colonel V.A.S. Williams, off to Valcartier to act as Camp Commandant (above, p. 21).

by his former Military Secretary, Colonel J.C. MacDougall, an officer of the Canadian Permanent Force, who was granted the “local and temporary rank of Brigadier General\* while commanding Canadians in England.”<sup>2</sup> But the extent of MacDougall’s powers was soon to be questioned.

Brief reference has already been made to an officer who was destined to play an important role in the affairs of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Colonel J. W. Carson, who at the outbreak of war was in command of the 1st Regiment (Canadian Grenadier Guards), a Militia unit localized at Montreal, had headed the First Canadian Contingent’s advance party, and had remained in England as the Minister’s “special representative” (above, p. 35). An Order in Council passed in January 1915 defined Colonel Carson’s status as that of representing “the Militia Department of Canada in the United Kingdom, in connection with supplies and other requirements for the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force”, and as acting “as agent of the Minister of Militia in maintaining . . . depots. . . for the upkeep and subsistence of the Canadian Expeditionary Force both in the United Kingdom and at the seat of war.”<sup>3</sup> Declaring that these restrictions would limit his usefulness to the Canadian Government, Carson urged the Prime Minister to grant him wider powers, suggesting that he be authorized “to advise General Alderson when desired”, and appointed as an assistant to Sir George Perley.<sup>†</sup> But Sir Robert Borden advised the High Commissioner that the Order in Council went “quite far enough”.<sup>4</sup>

This did not deter Colonel Carson from giving the British authorities the impression that he had been granted wide powers. Questioned about returning incompetent officers to Canada, he told Southern Command on 18 February, “I am the only officer now serving in the country who would have that power, and I would not hesitate to act if the necessity were unfortunately to arise” - this in spite of the fact that Brig.-Gen. MacDougall had succeeded General Alderson as G.O.C. Canadian Troops in the United Kingdom.<sup>5</sup> Carson showed extreme reluctance to recognize the authority of MacDougall, whom he described as having been “left in the more or less imaginary command of the Canadian troops”. (Not included in MacDougall’s command at this time were the Canadian Training Depot at Tidworth, commanded by Colonel W. R. W. James, an officer of the Royal Artillery; and the Cavalry Brigade, commanded by Brig.-Gen. J. E. B. Seely.) Carson suggested to Sir Sam Hughes the advisability of appointing “a Senior Canadian Officer”, in a rank not below major general, to be in “supreme central command of all the Canadian Troops who might be at any time in England”.<sup>6</sup>

But any aspirations that Carson may have had towards such an appointment for himself were due for a setback. Early in March Colonel James was given an appointment in France, and on the 19th Hughes bluntly notified

\* MacDougall’s promotion to major general though effective 21 September 1915 was not approved until August 1916.

† Perley a Minister without Portfolio in Borden’s Cabinet since June 1914, had been Acting High Commissioner for Canada in the United Kingdom. (As a cabinet minister he could not hold full ambassadorial status.) He was created K.C.M.G. on January 1915.

Carson, "General MacDougall is in military command of all Canadian units in Britain except those under Brigadier-General Seely. You will continue as authorized by Order in Council to represent the Defence Minister for Canada in Britain."<sup>7</sup> Although two days earlier the Minister had somewhat forcefully told MacDougall, "You must assume your responsibilities", in continuing to deal directly with Carson on a variety of subjects by no means confined to the provision of supplies and equipment, he kept that officer in a position to pass along instructions to the G.O.C. Canadians.

That Carson was not satisfied to confine his activities to the United Kingdom is illustrated by an incident that occurred in the early summer of 1915, just after the Second Battle of Ypres. This was an attempt by him to have all Canadian battalion commanders in France promoted to the rank of colonel "as some slight reward for their magnificent work during the trying times of the last few weeks". Should considerations of establishment prevent this, he suggested that they be made brevet colonels. Sir Sam Hughes approved this decidedly unusual suggestion, and Carson notified General Alderson of the Minister's authority for a "step in rank to all Lieutenant-Colonels at the Front".<sup>8</sup> In due course the matter reached the War Office, which sent a carefully worded letter to the C.-in-C. British Army in France making no ruling as to whether the promotions should take place but pointing out that such promotions could not "be recognized as affecting in any way the precedence of these officers in relation to that of others in your Command".<sup>9</sup> Alderson did not make the promotions, and despite Carson's efforts to keep the question alive (he wrote Sir Sam seven letters on the matter), the Minister made no demands upon the Divisional Commander to carry out the original instructions.<sup>10</sup>

In May 1915 the formation of the 2nd Canadian Division and the appointment of Major-General Steele as its commander introduced a new complication. There were now two separate Canadian commands in the United Kingdom, though neither the limits of each commander's authority nor the channels of communication he was to use had been clearly defined. It seemed necessary to establish some central control, but this was not done. Instead, on 26 July Sir Sam Hughes (who was then in the United Kingdom) requested the Acting Minister of Militia to "please inform Militia Council that Major-General Steele is promoted to command South-Eastern District including all Canadians in England"<sup>11</sup>. MacDougall was to retain his rank of brigadier general while continuing to command the Canadian Training Division at Shorncliffe.<sup>12</sup> On 3 August Steele took over command of the Shorncliffe Area from a British officer, and two weeks later Major-General R. E. W. Turner arrived from France to command the 2nd Canadian Division.

Carson (who had been promoted to brigadier general in May) lost little time in passing on what he described as the Minister's "views and ideas and wishes" as to the relative positions of Steele, MacDougall and Turner. In a letter to Steele, dated 27 August, he spoke of his own "very extended powers" as 'Vice Minister of the Department of Militia and Defence in the British Isles and at the Seat of War.' As such, he required that all promotions and appointments of

officers were to be referred to him; and he reserved the right to correspond directly upon Canadian matters with the two divisional commanders at Shorncliffe. Steele's command over the two divisions would be exercised through their respective General Officers Commanding, to whose discretion would be left all matters of training. Brig.-Gen. MacDougall's Canadian Training Division was enlarged to include all Canadian Troops in England other than those of the 2nd Division.<sup>13</sup> Steele expressed general agreement with these views, at the same time protesting against any arrangement that would cause him to be by-passed in the chain of command and made the "fifth wheel on the coach".

In November Carson (now a major general), seeking to "do away with all bother and trouble which will always be in existence under present conditions", suggested that the Minister make Steele Inspector General of Canadian forces in the United Kingdom.<sup>14</sup> But this attempt to remove a potential source of disturbance failed, and Steele remained as G.O.C. Shorncliffe area. Before the end of the month another new command had been created. A decision had been reached that complete units arriving from Canada after the departure of the 2nd Canadian Division should be sent to a new camp to be established at Bramshott in the Aldershot area, instead of to Shorncliffe, which had reached its limit in accommodation, and on 19 November Brig.-Gen. Lord Brooke was brought back from France to become G.O.C. "Canadian Division, Bramshott".

More confusion followed. On 3 December General Carson asked the War Office if it would be "at all possible to add the piece of the Aldershot Command which we are now occupying to the Shorncliffe Command." This would enable training at Bramshott to be regulated from Shorncliffe and would obviate the necessity of having "to correspond with, and be under the orders of, two Imperial Commands".<sup>15</sup> Acting on this request the War Office notified the G.O.C.-in-C. Aldershot Training Centre on 12 December that Major-General Steele would be "entirely responsible for the training of the Canadians in your command" - an announcement that greatly pleased Steele but not MacDougall. The latter complained to Carson, who proceeded to explain to a somewhat puzzled War Office that MacDougall was "in command of all Canadian troops in England, under the supervision, however, of Major-General Steele." He went on to emphasize, "at the moment, Lord Brooke, the Commanding Officer in Bramshott, is serving under the orders and instructions of Brigadier-General MacDougall". Carson followed this up with a visit to the War Office, as a result of which he told Steele, a bit optimistically, that everything was "straightened out, and we all know just where we are and in consequence all attend to our own work without treading on anybody's corns". Carson described MacDougall as "responsible for the training and discipline of all Canadians in England" - a statement to which Steele took exception, pointing out that such a situation would prevent him from exercising any supervision in such matters.

The bickering continued. By the end of 1915 Carson had become thoroughly dissatisfied with the situation, and during December he sent the Minister a number of strongly-worded communications urging a clarification of

his own status - MacDougall had charged that Carson was not a member of the C.E.F. - and calling for an organization in the United Kingdom that would be “almost a duplicate of your complete organization in Ottawa”. He proposed the establishment of “either a Sub-Militia Council or a Financial Committee” with, in addition to himself “as practically Acting Minister of Militia over here, as your representative, an Adjutant General and Quartermaster General and an Inspector General’s Branch”<sup>16</sup>.

There was indeed need for coordination in control. Communications from Militia Headquarters were being sent direct to the War Office, to the G.O.C. Canadians at Shorncliffe (Steele), the G.O.C. Canadian Division at Shorncliffe (MacDougall), and to Major-General Carson. In a letter to the Minister the Corps Commander in France complained of “quadruple control”, with Carson, Steel, MacDougall and Brooke all dealing directly with his headquarters. Also involved in the conduct of C.E.F. affairs were Sir George Perley and Sir Max Aitken, whose participation added two more to the number of Canadian authorities with whom the War Office found itself corresponding. Perley was indeed in an unenviable position as a result of the Minister of Militia’s desire to keep matters firmly within his own control. “When I hear a man say”, wrote the High Commissioner to Borden, “that he understands ‘There are two Governments in Canada, one of which is represented here by various people sent over by Hughes and is apparently not under control of the others’, it makes me squirm.” He complained that the Militia Department dealt with his office on routine matters only and by-passed him on anything of importance, and he deplored the fact “that Canadian methods of administration are rather being laughed at over here”.<sup>17</sup> Yet Ottawa seemed in no hurry to act. “I am at my wits’ end to know how to unravel the tangle which has arisen”, Carson admitted to Steele on 1 February.

Early in January an inquiry from the Colonial Secretary as to the “exact position of Carson” gave the C.G.S., Major-General Gwatkin, an opportunity of setting forth his views regarding a better administration for the United Kingdom. In a memorandum to the Deputy Minister of Militia he maintained that Carson was performing functions beyond the scope assigned to him by Order in Council and had in military matters “gradually acquired an influence which is viewed with alarm on both sides of the Atlantic”. Gwatkin recommended the establishment of a local Council which would be the medium of communication between the Militia Department and the War Office on matters connected with the administration of the C.E.F.<sup>18</sup> The official Canadian reply to the Colonial Secretary confirmed that Carson’s original functions had not been extended and promised that the whole situation would be taken up fully by the Minister of Militia, who was soon to visit Great Britain.

### **Sir Sam Hughes’ “Informal” Council**

Nothing had been done in Ottawa about Gwatkin’s memorandum when Sir Sam left for England on 9 March 1916, and now Sir Robert Borden was receiving reports from various sources about the unsatisfactory state of affairs in

the United Kingdom. Characteristically the Minister of Militia pursued his own course of action, and on 24 March he informed the Prime Minister, "I am bringing Dave Watson [Brig.-Gen. David Watson, who was commanding the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade in France] back to England to make him Inspector-General and knock the whole thing into shape."<sup>19</sup> On the 31st Hughes authorized Sir Max Aitken to set up an "informal" Council composed of General Carson, General Watson, an Acting Quartermaster General (Colonel George Murphy), an Acting Adjutant General (Brig.-Gen. MacDougall - "if General Watson would deem it proper"), the Director Medical Services, and Sir Max himself. The Council would meet weekly, and on any non-military question would consult Sir George Perley, the High Commissioner.<sup>20</sup> A few days later, before returning to Canada, Sir Sam added Brig.-Gen. Lord Brooke to the Council.

Meanwhile, back in Canada Sir Robert Borden was proceeding with his own plan for an Overseas Council. A draft report to the Cabinet based upon recommendations from the Deputy Minister of Militia and General Gwatkin (whose earlier memorandum seems to have been carried off to England by Hughes)<sup>21</sup> made submission for a Canadian Overseas Council presided over by Sir George Perley. There would be five members - a vice-president and representatives of the C.G.S., the Adjutant General, the Quartermaster General and the Accountant and Paymaster General - and five associate members, including the Director General of Medical Services and officers representing the Army Council, the G.O.C. Canadian forces in the field and the Master General of Ordnance.<sup>22</sup> Before this draft came before the Cabinet, however, Sir Sam Hughes returned to Ottawa and apparently persuaded the Prime Minister to give his own overseas committee a fair trial.

But its existence was short and its record unimpressive. Two meetings were held at the Hotel Cecil - on 5 and 20 April 1916. The first, described in the minutes as an "Informal meeting of four members of the Committee appointed by the Minister of Militia and Defence", was attended by Carson, Watson, Brooke and Murphy. Among other decisions was one that Brig.-Gen. Watson (whom the Minister had appointed to command the 4th Division, which was about to be formed at Bramshott) should take over temporarily the command of all Canadian troops in England, and that immediate steps should be taken to have Brig.-Gen. MacDougall attached to the Canadian Corps Headquarters in France "for instructional purposes for a definite time". The second meeting decided on the name "Headquarters, Canadian Expeditionary Forces, London, England", but, in the absence of Watson, agreed to hold in abeyance "all matters of importance affecting the Canadian Expeditionary Forces" until he could be present.<sup>23</sup> A meeting called for 27 April was postponed sine die, as was a further meeting planned for 4 May.

Sir Max Aitken, who had attended neither meeting, reported to the Minister the failure of his project in a telegram dated 10 May 1916. The stumbling block in the way of carrying out Sir Sam's instructions had been General Watson, who "insisted on Steele and MacDougall being disposed of entirely as the condition of his taking command in England". But MacDougall

not unnaturally had refused to be ousted for a temporary post in France “to find on my return that my past year’s work has been all pulled to pieces”. Aitken was not prepared to head the Council unless he had the cooperation of all its members. He reported to Sir Sam, “I could not now rely on Watson supporting me. . . I decided on my own account to place every obstacle in the way of the formation of that Committee and this I have done.” Watson took command of the 4th Division, “evidently very pleased to be relieved of responsibility for Shorncliffe”.<sup>24</sup>

Sir Sam gave a copy of this message to Sir Robert Borden, who passed over what seemed a good opportunity to authorize the formation of his own version of an Overseas Council. The Prime Minister was in an awkward position. The Minister of Militia was involved in a controversy over certain of the Shell Committee’s contracts,\* and it was well known that Sir Robert was administering Hughes’ Department while a Royal Commission investigated the matter.<sup>27</sup> To have put his own drastic reorganization into effect at this time would have brought publicity that would further damage Sir Sam’s prestige and add to his troubles. Sir George Perley was expected to visit Canada soon, and the Prime Minister may well have decided to defer action until conferring with him and Hughes. Perley came to Ottawa in July, and on his return to England in September he criticized the existing arrangements in Great Britain as “neither dignified nor effective”. He expressed himself in favour of a small committee of about four, “chosen from our most capable and respected men”, with a civilian at the head.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Acting Sub-Militia Council**

On the completion of the Shell Committee inquiry Sir Sam Hughes returned to England, having been formally authorized by an Order in Council to make more effective arrangements “for the organization and training of the Canadian Expeditionary Forces now in Great Britain”. He arrived in London on 30 July, and on the following day received the following request from Sir Robert Borden: “When you have reached conclusion respecting your proposals for reorganization, please cable them fully as they should be definitely embodied in Order in Council and it would be desirable to consider them before they are actually put in operation.”<sup>29</sup> On 16 August and again on the 24th Sir Robert was forced to press Sir Sam for his recommendations.<sup>30</sup> Finally on 6 September the Minister of Militia cabled a rather vague progress report in which he expressed the hope that he would have a full report “ready to mail by the end of week. Meantime everything going splendidly.”<sup>31</sup>

Hughes might have elaborated that he had already completed the organization of an “Acting Sub-Militia Council for Overseas Canadians”, and that it had held its first meeting on 5 September.<sup>32</sup> On the very day of Sir Sam’s

\* On 28 March 1916 a Liberal member of Parliament (Mr. G.W. Kyte) referred to enormous profits to American promoters arising from certain fuse and cartridge-case contracts made with the Shell Committee. The M.P. charged that one such promoter, Honourary Colonel J.W. Allison, had used his influence with the Minister of Militia to secure contracts with the Shell Committee.<sup>25</sup> A Royal Commission exonerated Hughes and the Shell Committee but strongly censured Allison for Deception in his relations with the Minister and the committee.<sup>26</sup>

cable to the Prime Minister, Canadian newspapers broke the news that a military council of seven members had already met. Sir Robert immediately questioned Hughes about this “extraordinary press report”, repeating his earlier injunction that the proposed arrangements should not be announced until they had been embodied in an Order in Council.<sup>33</sup> Then, on the 8th, Canadian papers republished a London report giving the composition of the new council, which had General Carson as president. Bluntly the Prime Minister cabled Sir Sam: “Greatly surprised that composition of proposed Overseas Council is announced in press this morning. Hope you can return immediately. Kindly cable date.”<sup>34</sup> But this demand brought only an evasive reply from the Minister of Militia two days later. He could not understand Borden’s “peculiar message”; he had mailed a report on the proposed Council, and he understood absolutely that nothing was settled “until approved by Order in Council”; he was just leaving for an inspection of timber camps at various points which would entail an absence of about a week.<sup>35</sup>

The Acting Sub-Militia Council, thus set up in defiance of the Prime Minister’s orders, was destined to last only three months. A memorandum handed by Sir Sam Hughes to the Secretary on 20 September defined its function and membership. The Council was to be an “advisory body,” advising generally with respect to the Canadian Expeditionary Force. It was to be composed of Major-General Carson (Chairman), Brig.-Gen. Lord Brooke (Military Representative of the Department of Militia and Defence at the Front),\* and ten other designated appointments, including those held by Steele and MacDougall.<sup>36</sup>

From Ottawa the Minister of Militia (who evidently had no intention of delegating any of his authority) sent orders that “all reports of Sub-Militia Council must be carefully prepared and must be endorsed from here before final adoption”.<sup>37</sup> At its weekly meetings the Council dealt with numerous matters ranging from the organization of a boys’ battalion (22 September) to the question of mounting all military policemen on bicycles instead of horses (27 October). On 13 October it passed a “unanimous resolution” which would allow all men set aside for the as yet unformed 5th and 6th Divisions to be sent to France as reinforcements. At the next meeting, however, it learned that the Minister had not approved this recommendation and had ruled that the two divisions “should be gotten in shape”.<sup>38</sup>

Yet though its span of life was short, its terms of reference vague and its status uncertain, the creation of the Acting Sub-Militia Council marked a definite step towards an effective overseas organization. But Sir Sam’s efforts to bring about a more businesslike state of affairs were doomed to failure when he chose to ignore the Prime Minister’s repeated instructions; it is characteristic of the man that he should not have comprehended what the consequence of his attitude must be.

\* Unfortunately Lord Brooke was wounded on 11 September while commanding the 12th Infantry Brigade in France, and was dropped from the Council’s membership. Sir Max Aitken continued to act as Canada’s Military Representative at the front until January 1917, when Lt.-Col. R. Manly Sims was appointed Canadian Representative at British G.H.Q.

### Formation of the Overseas Ministry

While Hughes remained in the United Kingdom contrary to Borden's expressed wish, in Ottawa Sir Robert was taking action towards establishing an Overseas Ministry. By 2 September a revised draft report for submission to the Cabinet proposed the appointment of a "Minister of Overseas Military Forces of Canada" with wide powers, including those with respect to overseas troops "theretofore exercised by or charged upon the Minister of Militia and Defence". The Overseas Minister would conduct all negotiations between the Canadian and British Governments concerning Canada's overseas forces and would be assisted by an advisory council, to be appointed by the Governor in Council.<sup>39</sup>

The Minister of Militia finally reached Ottawa on 7 October, but not until the 17th\* did Borden inform him of the projected Overseas Ministry. "I am not criticizing your suggestions as to the personnel of the proposed Overseas Council", the Prime Minister wrote Hughes next day, "but I am of the opinion that the direction of a member of the Government resident in London is both desirable and essential."<sup>40</sup> Sir Sam, however, was not disposed to have power wrested from his grasp without a struggle. On 23 October he produced a draft Order in Council which would, if approved, have authorized the organization of his own Sub-Militia Council. (It was returned to the Militia Department on 16 November with the note, "Privy Council Referred Back".)<sup>41</sup>

Also on the 23rd Sir Sam wrote at length to the Prime Minister criticizing the proposed changes in overseas administration. He justified the existing organization in the United Kingdom, which had General Carson "surrounded by a sub-militia Council composed of the ablest Officers to be found". He declared that the appointment of an Overseas Minister "would be absurd. There is no more necessity for a resident Minister in Britain than there is for a resident Minister at our Camps in British Columbia, Calgary, Camp Hughes, Camp Borden, Valcartier etc." Having personally established a system "to conduct this war on the basis of proper administration . . . and the perfect harmony between all branches of the Canadian Force and the British Force", he could not "concur in the proposal to destroy these plans".<sup>42</sup> Yet three days later, having realized that Sir George Perley's name did not appear in the draft Order, he indicated that he would support the creation of an Overseas Ministry if Sir Max Aitken were selected as its head.<sup>43</sup> Characteristically on his own responsibility he cabled Aitken asking whether he would accept such an appointment, only to receive a negative reply-Sir Max considered himself "not qualified to fill post".<sup>44</sup> Hughes nevertheless continued to press for Aitken's appointment, suggesting that "Max would be the Canadian representative there for War Purposes under me, while Perley should, as now, be consulted regarding all contracts and purchases not under the fixed charges" (see below, p. 359).<sup>45</sup>

\* It so happened that on that date The London Gazette announced the appointment of Sir Sam as an Honorary Lieutenant General in the British Army with effect from 18 October 1916.

Meanwhile Borden had presented the draft order to the Cabinet and found that "every one of my colleagues warmly supported the proposal". On 27 October he cabled Perley: "Order in Council signed today creating Military Overseas Forces. Hughes greatly excited and may resign". On the 31st a further Order in Council appointed Sir George Perley "Minister of Overseas Military Forces from Canada in the United Kingdom".<sup>46</sup>

It was a bitter blow to the Minister of Militia. As we have observed, it had always been his practice to retain as far as possible exclusive control over all matters concerned with his Department. On his recent return to Canada, however, he had found many of his former responsibilities distributed among others. Mr. J. W. Flavelle, Chairman of the Imperial Munitions Board, was dealing with the production of ammunition; Mr. A. E. Kemp, Chairman of the War Purchasing Commission, had war contracts largely in hand; Sir Thomas Tait (and later Mr. R. B. Bennett), Chairman of the National Service Boards, was concerned with improving recruiting. A Parliamentary Secretary (Mr. F. B. McCurdy) had been appointed to handle much of the routine work of the Department. Sir Sam appears to have accepted these arrangements without undue concern, realizing the need for allotting to others part of the enormous burden falling upon the Militia Department in time of war. But he was not prepared to accept curtailment of the overseas responsibilities which he had always considered his personal sphere of operations.

On 1 November he expressed his views to the Prime Minister in an unfortunate letter which was to have significant consequences. After defending his actions in setting up the Acting Sub-Militia Council he proceeded to charge Sir Robert with a lack of frankness over Perley's appointment.

It might be implied from your memorandum that my failing to secure authority by Order-in-Council for this Sub-Militia Council impelled you to the course you are now pursuing regarding Sir George Perley. May I be permitted to say that both you and I know to the contrary. I knew early in August that Sir George Perley had planned something along these very lines. You have, also, admitted that as early as the first week of September you had this matter under consideration by you. I understand that it was under consideration by you and Perley earlier. You incidentally remarked yesterday that you had not consulted any of your colleagues. Of course when I drew your attention to the statement, you corrected yourself.<sup>47</sup>

These were harsh words which no superior could overlook, and they made it clear that as long as Sir Sam was in office there could never be the spirit of cooperation between the Militia Department and the Overseas Ministry upon which the latter's successful operation depended. On the 6th Borden told Perley of having received a letter from Sir Sam "which demands most serious consideration at my hands".<sup>48</sup>

After discussion with his colleagues the Prime Minister reached his decision, and on the 9th he wrote Sir Sam a letter expressing regret "that you saw fit to address to me, as head of the Government, a communication of that nature". Sir Robert recalled the time and energy which he had expended in supporting Hughes in the administration of his department - a very difficult task "by reason of your strong tendency to assume powers which you do not possess and which

can only be exercised by the Governor in Council". He criticized Sir Sam's attitude of wanting to administer his department "as if it were a distinct and separate Government in itself", charging that "such an attitude is wholly inconsistent with and subversive of the principle of joint responsibility upon which constitutional Government is based". Finally he took strong exception to the statements and general character of Sir Sam's letter. "You must surely realize", he concluded, "that I cannot retain in the Government a colleague who has addressed to me such a communication. I regret that you have thus imposed upon me the disagreeable duty of requesting your resignation as Minister of Militia and Defence."<sup>49</sup> On 11 November Sir Sam tendered his resignation with "much satisfaction",<sup>50</sup> and on the 23rd Mr. A. E. Kemp was named Minister in his place.

Sir George Perley regarded his new appointment as inferior to his existing post, and the Prime Minister had to convince him as to the relative importance of the two positions that he would now be holding. He told Sir Thomas White (the Minister of Finance, who was visiting the United Kingdom) that he fully understood the relative importance of the two positions, but that if he found himself unable to discharge the duties of both, he preferred that of High Commissioner. Nevertheless, under strong pressure from Sir Robert Borden, in whose judgement, Perley's "status as Minister of Overseas Forces altogether outclasses the position of High Commissioner" with duties "infinitely more important than those which devolved upon you as High Commissioner",<sup>51</sup> Sir George began vigorously discharging his new responsibilities. His first major concern was the selection of a commander for the Canadian Forces in Britain. With Sir Thomas White he spent three days in France interviewing senior Canadian officers. The choice fell upon Major-General R. E. W. Turner, G.O.C. 2nd Canadian Division. Like most serving officers in a theatre of operations Turner was reluctant to relinquish the command of his division for a non-combatant position, and in accepting the appointment in the United Kingdom he requested that "in the event of a Canadian General Officer being appointed to the command of the Canadian Corps" his claim as "the senior Major General" should be given priority.<sup>52</sup>

An Order in Council appointing Turner General Officer Commanding Canadians vice Major-General MacDougall was approved on 1 December. MacDougall had recently assumed the command of "Canadian Troops -- Brighton" and had moved his headquarters to that city (below, p. 224). But early in January Headquarters, Overseas Military Forces of Canada, took over the functions of the Brighton Command, and MacDougall, for whom there was no suitable position in the new organization "owing to his high rank", returned to Canada in March. For his Adjutant General Sir George Perley asked for and obtained Colonel P. E. Thacker (A.A. & Q.M.G. 2nd Canadian Division); the new Quartermaster General was Colonel A. D. McRae, who had been serving as Acting Overseas Deputy Minister in Sir Sam's Sub-Militia Council. The office of the new headquarters (including the General Staff, Adjutant General and Quartermaster General) was established in London at Argyll House, in Regent Street.

The Acting Sub-Militia Council had continued to function while the new Overseas Ministry was being organized. By unanimous resolution on 16 November its members tendered their resignations to Sir George Perley, who asked them to carry on for the time being. The Council was finally dissolved on 5 December, the day on which the new Headquarters, Overseas Military Forces of Canada came into being. Two days later an Order in Council cancelled Major-General Carson's original appointment as representative of the Militia Department in the United Kingdom. He proceeded on a long leave of absence which was extended from time to time until 31 January 1918, when he was struck off strength in Canada as surplus to establishment.

By the end of 1916 the Overseas Ministry was firmly established in the British Isles. It did not solve completely the problems involved in administering the C.E.F. overseas, and misunderstandings continued to arise between it and the Canadian Corps in France and Militia Headquarters in Ottawa. Yet it was a much better organization than any that had existed since the outbreak of war, and no major changes in its structure were to be made until the spring of 1918. Much of its strength lay in the fact that from now on all Canadian military control in the British Isles was concentrated in a single authority, Turner, who was the Minister's chief military adviser in all matters relating to the organization and administration of the Overseas Forces. As the Minister's delegate he was authorized to discuss with British General Headquarters in France all questions of policy and administration connected with Canadian Forces in the field and to deal directly on such matters with the Corps Commander.

As emphasized by Sir George Perley in a memorandum defining the new Ministry's terms of reference, the appointment held by the G.O.C. Canadian Forces in the British Isles was now "the senior military appointment in the Overseas Military Forces of Canada".<sup>53</sup>

### **Recruiting in 1914-1915**

Another matter that was to cause the Canadian Government no little concern as the war progressed was the provision of manpower to take care of Canada's steadily increasing needs at home and overseas. This is a convenient place to introduce the problem.

For the first year and a half of the war the country found itself faced with no serious recruiting problems. The winter of 1913-1914 had been one of considerable unemployment in Canada, and when war broke out in the following August, conditions pointed to the probability of an increased shortage of jobs during the coming winter.<sup>54</sup> Although fear of being unemployed was, of course, far from being the only motive which impelled men to answer the call to arms in very large numbers, it must be considered a not unimportant factor. As we have seen, supply far exceeded demand, and in the early months of hostilities it was possible to enrol only some 36,000 of those wanting to enlist.

Of the 1500 officers who were appointed to the First Canadian Contingent, two-thirds were Canadian-born, while 29 per cent gave other parts of

the Empire as their place of birth. But the enlistments by other ranks told a different story. Less than 30 per cent of the 34,500 accepted had been born in Canada; 65 percent had come originally from the British Isles or from other parts of the Empire.

There were certain obvious reasons for this, as were noted by the contemporary Canadian Annual Review. People born in the United Kingdom were more familiar with what war meant, and they were specially conscious of its nearness "to those living in the country which they still looked upon as home". Many of the men from the British Isles had received some military training, and that experience undoubtedly was a factor in prompting them to volunteer without delay. It is probably fair to say that at first the average Canadian tended to look upon the war as an Imperial war which did not affect his own country directly. It took him some time to recognize as a concrete danger what originally might have seemed a mere abstraction. Furthermore, the Canadian-born was more likely than the recent immigrant to be established in remunerative, congenial and steady employment, and therefore found it harder to tear up the deep roots which held him firmly to his native soil.<sup>55</sup> The first great surge of enlistments was to carry off those men who had come from the British Isles. Once that fruitful source of recruiting had dried up, replenishment was to be much more difficult.

We have noted that the strength of the Canadian military forces authorized to be on active service was periodically increased. When it was decided to form a second contingent in November 1914, approval was given to retain 30,000 men under arms in Canada. In July 1915 the authorized strength was set at 150,000, and on 30 October of the same year this number was increased to a quarter of a million.<sup>56</sup> Still these sizable demands seemed likely to be met without great difficulty. The steady flow of volunteers which had begun coming forward in answer to the Minister of Militia's "call to arms" kept up during 1915, and by the end of that year there appeared every possibility that 250,000 men would be in the C.E.F. within a few more months.

Among the reasons for this gratifying response to the growing demands on Canada's manpower was a relaxation of earlier restrictions. The year 1915 saw the first lowering of medical qualifications for enlistment. In July the required height for all corps except artillery was reduced from 53" to 52" (in the case of artillery from 57" to 54"). During the same month the minimum chest measurements were dropped half an inch to a range of 33-34 inches. August brought cancellation of the regulation requiring a married man to produce his wife's written consent before he could be enrolled.

More positive recruiting practices were introduced. After the dispatch of the First Contingent the Militia Department began granting the rank of lieutenant-colonel to certain prominent citizens (generally members of the local Militia unit), authorizing them to raise complete C.E.F. battalions; for it had been found that enlistment into specific battalions, commanded by well-known and respected men, appealed to many who did not want to become general reinforcements. Most cities and larger towns now had recruiting depots which,

while enlisting men for all branches of the C.E.F., concentrated upon enrolling specialists for such corps as the Army Service and the Medical. Many communities formed Citizen Recruiting Leagues and Committees, whose functions were to organize recruiting rallies and carry out other activities aimed at stimulating enlistment.

As might be expected, the Minister of Militia took a keen personal interest in recruiting, though the results of his participation were not uniformly beneficial. During 1915 he decided that C.E.F. units while mobilizing need not restrict their recruiting efforts to the Divisional Area or Military District in which they were located. A letter circulated on 1 October by Militia Headquarters permitting more latitude led to encroachments by battalion recruiting officers upon the territorial areas of other regiments and caused considerable ill-feeling.<sup>57</sup> After a heated dispute between the Officers Commanding the 4th Division (with headquarters in Montreal) and the 5th Division (Quebec City), the Adjutant General persuaded the Minister to cancel his earlier instructions, and to restrict recruiting to a territorial basis except in the case of special corps, such as pioneer, tunnelling and forestry units. Among other units permitted to recruit outside their territories were sportsmen's battalions, Scandinavian battalions, a Methodist battalion and an Orange battalion.<sup>58</sup>

Hughes, never one to let the advice of his departmental officers in any way curb his enthusiasm for experiment, was personally the author of the recruiting and billeting policy which was adopted in Canada during the winter of 1915-1916. This scheme provided for men to be recruited and trained not only in cities, where reasonable facilities for the purpose would exist, but also in rural localities. Regulations drafted by the Minister "in his own handwriting" provided for each electoral district to constitute a battalion area (with some districts being combined to form single areas). Each would have a battalion commander or organizer with an adjutant, paymaster and medical officer and the necessary clerical and training staffs. Every centre raising 25 or more men after 1 November 1915 would have such men billeted in homes in the community. The billeting allowance for each man was 60 cents a day, and a married man would also draw 25 cents a day in lieu of the separation allowance for which he could not now qualify. Each recruit would receive a drill book free of charge; qualifying schools for N.C.Os. and men were to be provided at as many centres as possible; and from "the most efficient of the recruits" would be chosen officers and N.C.Os.

But the experiment lasted only one season. Commanders' reports showed that though the scheme had attracted recruits in satisfying numbers, very little training had been accomplished. In October 1916 the Prime Minister was informed that "the experience of the Militia Department last winter with regard to billeting of troops in small detachments throughout the country, while no doubt assisting in recruiting, was not such as to encourage a continuation of this practice."<sup>59</sup>

### A Pledge of 500,000 Men

On the whole, then, recruiting moved along in a satisfactory manner into the autumn of 1915. By that time the 2nd Canadian Division had joined the 1st Division in France to form the Canadian Corps. At Ypres, in April, Canadians had fought their first major action, but no serious problem of reinforcements had yet arisen. In November Major-General Sir Eugène Fiset (Deputy Minister of Militia from December 1906 to March 1924) wrote, "so whole-hearted has been the response . . . that the equivalent of a Division [the 3rd] can be added, without difficulty, to the Canadian Army Corps already in the trenches."<sup>60</sup> More striking evidence of the belief (at least on the part of the Prime Minister) that Canada had a considerable pool of manpower available and willing to enlist came on the last day of the year. Without previous warning, Sir Robert Borden, in a New Year's Message to the people of Canada, announced that the authorized strength of the forces was being doubled; commencing on 1 January 1916 the goal was to place 500,000 men in uniform.<sup>61</sup>

It is necessary to define the exact nature of the new commitment. There were many who appeared to believe that the pledge would be fulfilled by obtaining 500,000 enlistments. Examination of all the evidence, however, makes it clear that the new figure was to be the actual strength at which Canada's military forces were to be maintained. This meant that because of wastage by reason of deaths, discharges, operational casualties, etc., many thousands in excess of half a million would have to be enrolled before the target could be reached. The Senate was warned of the true situation (by Brig.-Gen. the Hon. James Mason on 14 March 1916) in these words: "This large number [500,000], if and when sent to the Front, must be maintained, and it has been estimated that the casualties will not be less than five per cent monthly of the total force. This means that we shall have to provide each month, to maintain our Army's strength, at least 25,000 new men - or 300,000 a year. There can be no question that the additional 250,000 to bring our quota up to 500,000 and the 300,000 if required, annually to keep it at that figure, will not be obtained under the present system of enlistment."

The Senator seems to have faced facts more frankly than some of the officials in the Department of Militia and Defence. A report published by that Department attempted to perpetuate the erroneous impression that the goal of 500,000 was a recruiting figure, towards which almost 400,000\* men had been enlisted by the end of 1916.<sup>62</sup> In reality, however, the actual strength of the armed forces on 31 December 1916 was 299,937, or almost 100,000 lower than the total recruited since the beginning of the war.<sup>63</sup> This practice of using unrealistic statistics in an attempt to make the goal appear accessible was criticized by the Canadian Corps Commander, Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Currie,

\* The report gave the enlistments in the C.E.F. to the end of 1916 as 384,450. To this it added the number of Non-Permanent Active Militia (9646) and the Permanent Force (2451) that had been raised for guard or garrison duty in Canada, thereby reaching a total of 396,547.

in a letter written in January 1918:

I know that many people did not understand the urgent need of reinforcements and possibly they were not to blame for their ignorance, because in many published statements they were told the number who had enlisted and were not told the number of enlistments which were of no use to us.<sup>64</sup>

When the initial enthusiasm with which the Prime Minister's announcement had been received died down, there was concern in some quarters as to Canada's capabilities of obtaining such a large number of men by voluntary enlistment. Even before Sir Robert made the decision public his Parliamentary Secretary, Mr. R. B. Bennett, had bluntly warned him, "we cannot possibly look at half a million".<sup>65</sup> The Governor General, who had received no advance notice of the proposal, expressed the fear that "500,000 may be beyond the powers of the Dominion of Canada to provide under voluntary enlistment."<sup>66</sup> Sir Wilfrid Laurier called it "a large contract";<sup>67</sup> and Lord Shaughnessy, President of the C.P.R., did not consider it a "practicable suggestion", and sounded the warning that "if we were to attempt to raise 500,000, or add 225,000 to our present army, we would be making a draft upon the working population of this country that would be seriously felt".<sup>68</sup> The Minister of Militia did not appear to share these misgivings. Publicly he insisted, "We will raise the number now authorized . . . voluntarily and without compulsion or the semblance of compulsion."<sup>69</sup> Indeed, in a speech in Toronto four days after Borden's announcement, he revealed his intention of securing twenty-one additional divisions\* "before the snow flies next fall".<sup>70</sup> Privately Hughes assured Borden, "We can easily live up to your offer, if right systems are pursued."<sup>71</sup>

The Prime Minister himself must have been aware of the difficulties involved in placing large numbers of men in uniform. In the previous May he had answered a suggestion that more divisions be recruited by observing that "it is much easier to propose the organization, arming and equipment of a force of 250,000 men than to accomplish it".<sup>72</sup> Now, faced with the task of obtaining and maintaining twice that number, he admitted to the House of Commons in January that it was a large force to raise, but justified his decision on the grounds that it was "fitting that at the opening of the New Year we should announce to the Empire and to all the world that we were not only prepared but willing to do something more".<sup>73</sup> Whatever other considerations there may have been remain obscure.

Apparently Sir Robert took his decision without any serious consultation with his colleagues. Certainly his conclusion was reached without the benefit of any planned study of all that this large-scale commitment of Canada's manpower would involve. Only on the eve of making the formal announcement did he tell three of his cabinet ministers of his decision. On 30 December he wrote in his diary:

Worked at correspondence all day with Secretary. White [Minister of Finance], Hughes and Reid [Minister of Customs] came and I propounded to them proposal that force should be increased on 1st January to 500,000. They agreed . . . .

\* Sir Sam apportioned these divisions as follows: British Columbia, 2; Alberta, 2; Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 3; Toronto and district, 5; Eastern Ontario, 2; Western Ontario, 2; Quebec, 3 and possibly 4; Maritime Provinces, 2. Nothing came of this fantastic scheme.

A scrutiny of Sir Robert's hand-written diary reveals no further reference to this meeting or to the consideration which prompted the Prime Minister's decision. None of the three ministers appears to have been convinced that his leader was doing the right thing. "To more than double this establishment", recorded Sir Thomas White afterwards, "was a most formidable undertaking for a country which less than a year and a half before had considered 50,000 men the maximum it would be able to raise . . . Not one of us had any clear view as to how so many additional men could be raised . . ." <sup>74</sup> In July 1916 Sir Sam Hughes, was to remind the Prime Minister: "I recommended to you that we could raise as high as four hundred thousand soldiers for the front. Later on you recommended five hundred thousand." <sup>75</sup> And on 30 January 1917 Sir Sam emphasized in the House of Commons that the "offer of" 500,000 had been "made by the Prime Minister - on his own responsibility".\*

Borden had received no specific request from the British Government which would require Canada to consider raising a force of the size now authorized, and it is unlikely that his decision could have been based upon any information coming from the United Kingdom authorities. Indeed, on 4 January 1916, he complained to Sir George Perley:

During the past four months since my return from Great Britain, the Canadian Government (except for an occasional telegram from you or Sir Max Aitken) has had just what information could be gleaned from the daily press and no more. As to consultation, plans of campaign have been made and unmade, measures adopted and apparently abandoned and generally speaking steps of the most important and even vital character have been taken, postponed or rejected without the slightest consultation with the authorities of this Dominion. <sup>77</sup>

Could it have been that Borden felt his announcement of a figure of half a million, besides catching the public fancy, would strengthen his hand in his efforts to obtain from the British Government more information and a greater willingness to consult Canada on general policy in the conduct of the war? It is not without significance that in this same letter to Perley, sent four days after his public announcement, he wrote: "It can hardly be expected that we shall put 400,000 or 500,000 men in the field and willingly accept the position of having no more voice and receiving no more consideration than if we were toy automata."

There remains to be considered the effect of the Prime Minister's decision. The figure of 500,000 became a symbol. Instead of relating Canada's needs in manpower to the number of reinforcements actually required by her forces overseas, it became the fashion to speak of the necessity for Canada to redeem her "pledge" to place 500,000 men in uniform. At first everything looked most promising. The high rate of enlistments during the latter part of 1915 and the first half of 1916 made the prospect of obtaining 500,000 men appear very

\* Hughes had mentioned the figure of 500,000 on at least two occasions, but both of them were casual. On 7 October 1914, during a press interview in New York he had declared, "We can supply the Government with 500,000 picked men. This number will not be required from us, however, nor anything like this number, but they are available." And a year later (25 October 1915), during a recruiting meeting in Toronto, he was quoted as stating that the men at the front must be able to say, "We are coming General Kitchener, 500,000 strong." <sup>76</sup>

bright and encouraged those in authority to believe that Canada could provide and maintain additional divisions in the field. As we have seen (above, p. 133), in January a fourth division was offered and accepted; and while visiting England during the summer of 1916 the Minister of Militia committed Canada to raising a fifth division and advanced the possibility of providing a sixth.

Hughes was so carried away by the possibility of obtaining half a million men that he cabled Borden on 15 August to urge that since Australia had five divisions in France and enough troops in England and Egypt for four more (so he had been told), “surely with all our troops we can put at least eight if not ten Divisions in the field”.<sup>78</sup> In another message on the same day he asked to have “sixty to eighty thousand troops sent over immediately”; this would still leave “more than one hundred thousand troops in Canada”.<sup>79</sup> But a prompt reply from the Prime Minister instructed Sir Sam to take no immediate action, suggesting (quite correctly) that he had overestimated the strength of Australian Forces and also that of the troops in Canada, “which number at present is about 120,000”.<sup>80</sup>

Borden’s New Year’s announcement provided an immediate stimulus to recruiting. Enrolments during January 1916 totalled 29,295, an increase of almost 5600 over the previous month. In March 34,913 enlisted—a figure not to be passed until May 1918, when the operation of the Military Service Act brought in a total for the month of 38,789. By the end of May 1916 the authorized strength of 250,000 decided upon in the previous October had been reached, but still 200,000 men were needed to achieve the new objective. After the heartening initial spurt enlistments began steadily to diminish. May had produced 15,359 men, but June brought only 10,619, and in July the figure dropped to 8389. December 1916 saw only 5279 taken on strength — the smallest number to enrol in any month since the outbreak of war.<sup>81</sup>

Well-meant offers of assistance from various parts of the country had not been lacking. In March 1916 a letter to the Minister of Militia from a gentleman in British Columbia suggested as “a promising field of enlistment not heretofore exploited” the recruiting of Indians from reservations in the four western provinces. He estimated a potential of 12,000 able-bodied males “after deducting the Coast Indians, who are canoemen with large shoulders and small legs, due to excessive use of the former and the sitting posture of the latter”. He extolled the fighting qualities of the Indian, who was “accustomed to slaughter daily or to go hungry. . . . The offensive sights, noises and smells incidental to killing does not minimize but excites the primal instinct in them.”<sup>82</sup> Other proposals that poured in included an offer from Vancouver of “a full battalion of naturalized Japanese, all British subjects”,<sup>83</sup> a suggestion for forming a coloured regiment from the maritime provinces and Western Ontario,<sup>84</sup> and one for raising a Polish battalion.<sup>85</sup>

### **Failure of the Voluntary System**

One of the most serious omissions in whatever calculations Sir Robert Borden may have engaged in before making his momentous announcement was his failure to give due consideration to the adverse effects that it might have on

the requirements of industry and agriculture. Seventeen months of war had wrought a tremendous change in Canada's economy. The conditions of stagnation in business and unemployment which had existed at the outbreak of war were being rapidly dissipated during 1915. It should have been readily foreseen that there would be a rapid and continuing expansion in the munitions and other wartime industries and in agricultural production; and that this would inevitably bring increasing demands on Canada's manpower. Wages were bound to rise as employers strove to retain their present employees and augment their labour force. In such circumstances it was to be expected that large numbers of men physically fit for military service would recall their days of unemployment and would hasten to accept positions which provided higher rates of remuneration than the Army could offer.

By the early summer of 1916 this failure to consider the needs of industry and agriculture was bringing the system of voluntary recruiting under criticism. It was charged that indiscriminate recruiting was taking key personnel from industry, while men employed in non-essential work, though of suitable age and medical category, were shirking their duty by failing to enlist. In April a delegation from civilian recruiting organizations in four provinces told the Prime Minister that the existing recruiting arrangements were "expensive, unbusinesslike" and unreliable.<sup>86</sup> An editorial in the *Manitoba Free Press* condemned the aimless methods which had "swept into the battalions plenty of persons who ought not to be there", and urged the setting up of some advisory authority which could protect unsuitable applicants against their feeling that "duty calls them to the fields of Flanders".<sup>87</sup> On 12 April the New Brunswick Legislature passed a resolution recommending that "in order that 500,000 men promised by Canada to the Empire may be speedily raised" the Dominion Government should enact legislation calling to the colours all men of suitable age under an enrolment plan which would consider the requirements of agriculture and industry.<sup>88</sup> On 9 June Sir Thomas White, the Minister of Finance, told the Prime Minister of the strong feeling he had found in Toronto in favour of some system of national registration or compulsory service. Toronto employers felt that Ontario, where large numbers of skilled workers were joining the forces, was suffering more than the other provinces, where recruiting was practically at a standstill.<sup>89</sup>

The Government had indeed made some attempts to correct the matter in an "informal" way rather than by introducing any comprehensive legislation. Recruiting officers had been issued with instructions designed to prevent the enlistment of men employed in certain types of work. Special leave had been granted soldiers who wished to assist farmers during the busy seasons.<sup>90</sup> But these measures were insufficient and ineffective. The country was finding out, in the slow and painful school of experience, that a major war demanded full and effective use of its manpower, and it looked to the Government to give the required guidance and direction.

When Sir Thomas White made his representations the Prime Minister was already examining the possibility of a general registration of Canada's

manpower, and 16 August saw the passage of the first of a series of Orders in Council setting up a National Service Board. This civilian organization, which was headed by a Director General at Ottawa and Directors of National Service in the Military Districts, was charged with having "all available labour utilized to the greatest advantage" both for maintaining industry and furnishing men for military service. To this end it was to make an inventory of the labour of the Dominion, the data from which might also be useful in dealing with industrial conditions after the war. The first Director General of National Services was Sir Thomas Tait, President of the English-speaking Citizens' Recruiting League of Montreal, who resigned on 12 October when his choice of a Secretary was not approved by the Prime Minister, and was succeeded by Mr. R. B. Bennett.

The National Service Board's attempt to take an inventory of manpower was made early in 1917 by means of cards\* distributed through all post offices in Canada. When the Government overruled the Board's intention of making the completion and return of cards compulsory, extensive publicity was undertaken "to create an atmosphere sufficient to induce the people voluntarily to sign the cards".<sup>91</sup> Of the 1,549,360 cards returned, 206,605 were either blank or only partly completed. The Secretary of the National Service Board estimated that 20 per cent of the total males in Canada between 18 and 65 had failed to send in cards. After deducting cards of serving soldiers, non-British subjects, the physically unfit, personnel with more than three dependents and all others considered unsuitable, the Board reduced the above figure to a total of 470,703 military prospects, of whom 286,976 were not engaged in essential occupations.<sup>92</sup> From the cards in this last category the National Service Board sent Militia Headquarters lists of prospective recruits and these were passed to the appropriate District Recruiting Officers.

But the number of recruits obtained from these lists was negligible. Military District No. 10 (with headquarters at Winnipeg) canvassed 1767 men on its lists without obtaining a single recruit; 4497 names canvassed by M.D. No. 5 (Quebec) furnished only four enlistments.<sup>93</sup> The stock objection to enlisting, as reported by the District Officer Commanding M.D. No. 12 at Regina, was "I will wait and see what the National Service Commission tells me I ought to do"; and from Montreal the D.O.C. M.D. No. 4 observed, "Having filled up the National Service cards, they now claim that their pledge to the Government for industrial service anywhere in Canada exempts them from military service overseas."<sup>94</sup>

An effort to stimulate recruiting in Quebec by bringing back from France a prominent French-Canadian officer achieved little. What was to have been a complete French-Canadian battalion (the 258th) left Montreal for overseas on 2 October 1917 with a strength of only 15 officers and 221 other ranks. Henri Bourassa and other nationalists in Quebec were carrying on a virulent campaign

\* The cards asked for the following particulars: name, age, birthplace parentage and nationality; health, physical condition, sight, hearing, etc.; trade, profession, present occupation; and whether the individual was willing to perform National Service either by enlisting in the C.E.F. or by taking up special employment.

of opposition to Canada's participation in the war; and though they drew little support from leaders in public life, their undoubted influence over the masses was a major deterrent to enlistment. Bourassa's criticism was not directed solely against the Borden administration. He was particularly vindictive against Laurier, whose imperialistic tendencies he blamed for forcing the country towards conscription. "Sir Wilfrid Laurier", he charged, "is the most nefarious man in the province of Quebec, in the whole of Canada."<sup>95</sup>

The military authorities displayed extraordinary lapses of good judgement in handling recruiting in Quebec. When it was decided in August 1916 to appoint a Director of Recruiting in each Military District, the G.O.C. M.D. No. 4 (Headquarters at Montreal) selected Hon-Major the Rev. C. A. Williams, pastor of St. James' Methodist Church, Montreal. By a strange coincidence the appointee for M.D. No. 2 (Toronto) and the Chief Recruiting Officer for Canada were also named Williams, and both were Methodist clergymen. The appointment of an English-speaking Protestant in a predominantly French-speaking area was unfortunate, though there is evidence that the G.O.C., Major-General E. W. Wilson, has received more blame than he deserved. In a letter which he sent to Sir Edward Kemp on 31 May 1917, General Wilson described his difficulties in attempting to organize a French-Canadian Recruiting Association. (An English-speaking organization had been formed in Montreal shortly after the First Contingent left for England. It had raised a fund of more than \$25,000 and had given "most satisfactory results".) Wilson had solicited the assistance of a number of prominent gentlemen without success.\* "I had several interviews", he wrote, "with Senator Dandurand, also General Labelle and Colonel Ostell, and urged them to recommend a gentleman to take the active head of the recruiting, and preferred that they would recommend a Priest, and I regret to inform you that they were unable to secure the name of a Priest who would undertake the duties." He further reported that those whom he approached had not been able to raise any funds such as had been done by the English Recruiting Association, and that subsequently the English Organization "did render some financial assistance to French Canadian Battalions".<sup>96</sup> It may be added that the appointment of Williams was strongly criticized in the House in June, and came under frequent fire from the French press, a section of which indiscriminately confused the records of the three officers of the same name, thereby aggravating a largely imaginary grievance.

Across the country the recruiting situation continued to deteriorate. The total enrolled for April 1917 was only 4761. And this was the month of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, in which Canadian casualties numbered 10,602 in six days (below p. 265). News of the falling off in enlistments had reached the trenches. In December 1916 the G.O.C. 1st Canadian Division wrote to an officer in the Militia Department, "From reports that come from time to time Canada will find

\* Major-General Wilson lists the names of the following from whom he sought assistance: Senator Raoul Dandurand, Senator F. L. Beique. Sir Alexander Lacoste, Major Z. Hebert, Brig-Gen. A. E. Labelle, Lt.-Col. J. T. Ostell.

it hard to raise the half-million men as promised. It looks as if Compulsory Service must be introduced.”<sup>97</sup> Shortly before Christmas a letter drafted by the C.G.S. for the Minister to send to Sir Robert Borden declared that since the voluntary system was showing signs of collapse, “it would be a risky proceeding to place a 5th Division in the field”.<sup>98</sup>

Faced with the Government’s reluctance to introduce compulsory service the Militia Department evolved a scheme to call out on a voluntary basis 50,000 members of the Militia for home defence, thereby releasing for overseas the same number of C.E.F. troops in Canada. It was hoped that some of the recruits so obtained would volunteer for overseas service. Though District Officers Commanding with whom the proposal was discussed were less than enthusiastic about its prospects of success, an Order in Council passed on 16 March 1917 set up a Canadian Defence Force of forty-seven battalions. Military District Headquarters were instructed to mobilize designated regiments of the Militia without delay. But the project was a melancholy failure. On 30 April the last in an exchange of depressing telegrams in which the Minister of Militia, now Sir Edward Kemp (above, p. 211), was keeping Sir Robert Borden (then in the United Kingdom) fully posted, informed the Prime Minister, “Enlistments in Home Defence force negligible. Recruiting by voluntary methods almost at an end. Sentiment in favour of some form of compulsion growing.”<sup>99</sup> By the end of June 1858 recruits had been obtained; of these 1293 had joined the C.E.F. On 31 July orders were issued to demobilize the Canadian Defence Force.<sup>100</sup>

The Government had at last been forced to recognize the fact that it had reached the limit of the manpower obtainable by voluntary methods. To achieve the goal so optimistically set by Sir Robert Borden in his New Year’s Day message, Canada must now turn to conscription.

### **Reinforcement Establishments Overseas**

The means by which Canada adopted compulsory service will be dealt with in a later chapter. For the moment it may be useful to survey briefly the arrangements made to handle Canadian reinforcements in England and France.

It will be recalled that when the First Canadian Contingent arrived in England with more infantry battalions than were required for the three brigades of the 1st Division, one of these surplus units was made into a reserve cavalry regiment, and the other four became infantry reinforcing battalions (above, p. 39). At the same time the personnel made surplus by the reorganization of field artillery brigades were organized into brigade depot batteries for the supply of artillery reinforcements, while the reinforcement needs of other corps were met by forming depots or designating specific units (e.g., No. 2 Veterinary Section).<sup>101</sup> Because accommodation at British bases in France was limited, the Canadian Division’s ten per cent first reinforcements remained in England, and were placed in the General and Infantry Base Depots formed at Tidworth in January 1915. These, together with the other reinforcement units, later became

part of the Canadian Training Depot commanded by Colonel W. R. W. James (above, p. 202). The appointment of Brig.-Gen. MacDougall to command all Canadian troops in Britain coincided with the decision to transfer the majority of the Canadian units to the Shorncliffe area. The Canadian Training Depot, the General Base Depot and the Infantry Base Depot were abolished, and MacDougall's command was designated the Canadian Training Division, to distinguish it from the 2nd Canadian Division which was being formed at Shorncliffe.<sup>102</sup>

During March 1915 the four infantry battalions that had been set aside as reinforcement-holding units were joined by three more assigned to a similar role on arrival at Shorncliffe from Canada. Six of these "reserve" battalions (as they became known) were affiliated with formations in the field (two with each brigade), and for a short time the seventh acted as a reinforcement depot for Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (which, it will be recalled, was serving with a British division). When the 2nd Division was formed, an additional six units were provided to furnish its reinforcements, and towards the end of September 1915 the twelve reserve battalions were organized into four Reserve Brigades.<sup>103</sup>

To meet the 1st Division's reinforcement requirements, which the heavy casualties of the Battle of Ypres had materially increased, the War Office asked, in April 1915, for 6000 infantry to reach England every three months.<sup>104</sup> A call at once went out to every C.E.F. battalion in Canada not earmarked for inclusion in the 2nd Division to furnish a draft of five officers and 250 men.<sup>105</sup> During the last half of 1915 thirty-five infantry battalions in Canada sent such drafts. Some did this more than once - indeed one unit (the 79th Battalion from Brandon) supplied 1020 officers and men before, having refilled its ranks five times, it crossed the Atlantic itself.<sup>106</sup>

Although the demand on these battalions to furnish drafts delayed their own movement overseas, one by one they reached England with a full complement of officers and men. A few of them, as we have seen, became reserve battalions; others, designated as "depot" battalions, were attached to selected Reserve Brigades and were used to replenish the reserve battalions as these sent reinforcements to France. As the depot battalions became depleted of personnel they were absorbed into reserve battalions and lost their identity. Some, however, were to suffer a kinder fate, proceeding to the front as complete units in new divisions.

The decision to raise and dispatch from Canada "draft-giving battalions" at full establishment had been made in preference to a scheme proposed early in the war by the Chief of the General Staff, Colonel Gwatkin, who had recommended organizing depots in Canada for receiving and training recruits preparatory to their dispatch overseas in reinforcement drafts. Unfortunately the method adopted produced in England an accumulation of senior officers who could not be given suitable employment when their own units, depleted of junior officers and other rank personnel, were absorbed into the reserve battalions. Yet the authorities in Canada were reluctant to discontinue this system, for, as the

C.G.S. observed in June 1916: "Drafts, for administrative and financial reasons, are to be preferred; but the despatch of complete battalions would gratify the senior ranks and appeal to local sentiment."<sup>107</sup> Not until May 1917 was a policy introduced which required officers of rank higher than lieutenant who were surplus to establishment either to revert to lieutenant's rank as a reinforcement or be returned to Canada.<sup>108</sup> Subsequent to this ruling officers accompanying battalions from Canada were considered to be draft-conducting officers, regardless of rank, and could be retained in England or returned to Canada as decided by Headquarters O.M.F.C.

As we have seen (above, p. 204) limitations on space at Shorncliffe meant that complete units arriving from Canada after October 1915 were sent to the new Bramshott Camp. The Camp became the base reserve depot for supplying the reserve battalions at Shorncliffe with replacements for the reinforcements which they sent to France. In December the Bramshott battalions were organized into four brigades, three of which were used to form the 4th Division in the following May. When the Division left for France and the Somme in August 1916 it was replaced at Bramshott by a new "Canadian Training Division", commanded by Brig.-Gen. F. S. Meighen. At the end of April 1916 all the Canadian Reserve Brigades in England became known as "Training Brigades".<sup>109</sup>

By the end of December 1916 there were 7240 officers and 128,980 other ranks of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the United Kingdom (as compared with 2467 officers and 49,379 other ranks a year previously). At the same time strength returns showed 2526 officers and 105,640 other ranks in France. To accommodate the steadily growing numbers of Canadians in Britain, in the late autumn of 1916 the War Office placed at Canadian disposal additional camps at New Shoreham, Crowborough, Seaford and Hastings in Sussex. For ease of control the new camps were administered from temporary headquarters set up by Major-General MacDougall at Brighton (above, p. 211), when this was disbanded on 5 January 1917 Headquarters O.M.F.C. took over its functions.<sup>110</sup>

One of the first concerns of the newly formed Headquarters was to overhaul the arrangements for handling Canadian reinforcements in the United Kingdom. Investigation quickly revealed the need for a thorough reorganization, particularly for the infantry (comprising the bulk of the reinforcements), where the situation was "by far the most unsatisfactory of all the Arms". There were in England some seventy infantry battalions (exclusive of casualty units), of various strengths from a mere skeleton cadre up to full establishment. "As an efficient reinforcing machine for battalions at the front", stated the official report of the investigation, "the existing organization was entirely unsuited and inadequate." In taking immediate remedial action, infantry reinforcements were reorganized so as to bring about closer territorial associations between the Canadian provinces and the units in the field. Fifty-seven battalions were absorbed into twenty-six reserve battalions, grouped in six Reserve Brigades. Battalions not absorbed were earmarked for service in the field with divisions yet to be formed.<sup>111</sup>

March 1917 saw the introduction of a regimental territorial system. The reserve battalions in the United Kingdom were grouped with their affiliated battalions in France into Territorial Regiments bearing provincial designations. Later in the summer the scheme was extended to include units in Canada. After the end of 1916, with one exception no overseas battalions were raised in Canada, but in August 1917 one or more "Depot" battalions\* were formed in each of the provinces and placed in appropriate Territorial Regiments. A Territorial Regiment now comprised Depot battalions serving in Canada, reserve battalions in England, and battalions in France. By November 1918 the composition of these Regiments was as shown in the table on pages 226 and 227.

Steps had already been taken to ensure that the extent of a province's representation in battalions at the front should be in keeping with its ability to maintain the strength of such battalions. Quebec and British Columbia were the first to be affected. In December 1916 General Turner recommended that in order to remedy somewhat a disproportion at the front among battalions from various parts of Canada, two Montreal and two British Columbia battalions should be absorbed in other battalions from the same section. This would allow Nova Scotia and Ontario to increase their representation in France. In February 1917 the 85th Battalion, which had been recruited in Nova Scotia, and the 116th Battalion, raised in Ontario, were sent to France to replace two Montreal battalions (the 60th and 73rd), which eventually disappeared as their personnel were distributed among other field battalions.<sup>112</sup>

\* Not to be confused with the depot battalions which were earlier sent to the United Kingdom (above, p. 223).

## COMPOSITION OF TERRITORIAL REGIMENTS, C.E.F.—NOVEMBER 1918

DESIGNATION OF REGIMENTS (in alphabetical order)	RECRUITING AREAS IN CANADA	DESIGNATIONS OF BATTALIONS IN TERRITORIAL REGIMENTS		
		IN CANADA	IN ENGLAND	IN FRANCE
ALBERTA REGIMENT.....	Military District No. 13 (H.Q.—Calgary, Alta.)	1st Depot Bn., Alta. Regt.	21st Reserve Bn. (absorbed 9th Res. Bn. in October 1917).	10th, 31st, 49th, 50th Bns.
BRITISH COLUMBIA REGIMENT.....	Military District No. 11 (H.Q.—Victoria, B.C.)	1st Depot Bn., B.C. Regt. 2nd Depot Bn., B.C. Regt.	1st Reserve Bn. (absorbed 24th Res. Bn. in May 1917 and 16th Res. Bn. in Feb- ruary 1918).	7th, 29th, 72nd Bns.
MANITOBA REGIMENT.....	Military District No. 10 (H.Q.—Winnipeg, Man.)	1st Depot Bn., Man. Regt.	11th Reserve Bn. (absorbed 14th Res. Bn. in October 1917).	16th, 27th, 43rd Bns.
NEW BRUNSWICK REGIMENT.....	Military District No. 7 (H.Q.—Saint John, N.B.)	1st Depot Bn., N.B. Regt.	18th Reserve Bn. 13th Reserve Bn.	8th, 52nd, 78th Bns. 26th, 44th Bns.
NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT.....	Military District No. 6 (H.Q.—Halifax, N.S.)	1st Depot Bn., N.S. Regt.	17th Reserve Bn. (absorbed 26th Res. Bn. in October 1917).	25th, 85th Bns.; R.C.R.
1ST CENTRAL ONTARIO REGIMENT.	Military District No. 2 (H.Q.—Toronto, Ont.)	1st Depot Bn., 1st Central Regt. 2nd Depot Bn., 1st Central Regt.	3rd Reserve Bn. 12th Reserve Bn. (absorbed 5th Res. Bn. in February 1918).	4th, 19th Bns; 2nd, 4th C.M.R. 3rd, 15th, 20th, 75th Bns.
2ND CENTRAL ONTARIO REGIMENT	Military District No. 2 (H.Q.—Toronto, Ont.)	1st Depot Bn., 2nd Central Regt. 2nd Depot Bn., 2nd Central Regt.	8th Reserve Bn. (absorbed 2nd Res. Bn. in February 1918).	54th, 58th, 102nd, 116th Bns.
EASTERN ONTARIO REGIMENT.....	Military District No. 3 (H.Q.—Kingston, Ont.)	1st Depot Bn., Eastern Ont. Regt. 2nd Depot Bn., Eastern Ont. Regt.	6th Reserve Bn. (absorbed 7th Res. Bn. in February 1918).	2nd, 21st, 38th Bns; P.P.C.L.I.

WESTERN ONTARIO REGIMENT.....	Military District No. 1 (H.Q.—London, Ont.)	1st Depot Bn., Western Ont. Regt.	4th Reserve Bn. (absorbed 25th Res. Bn. in February 1918). 20th Reserve Bn. 23rd Reserve Bn. (absorbed 22nd Res. Bn. in May 1917).	1st, 18th, 47th Bns.
1ST QUEBEC REGIMENT*.....	Military District No. 4 (H.Q.—Montreal, P.Q.)	1st Depot Bn., 1st Quebec Regt.	13th, 42nd Bns. 14th, 24th, 87th Bns; 5th C.M.R.	
2ND QUEBEC REGIMENT*.....	Military District No. 5 (H.Q.—Quebec, P.Q.) Military District No. 4 (H.Q.—Montreal, P.Q.) Military District No. 12 (H.Q.—Regina, Sask.)	1st Depot Bn., 2nd Quebec Regt. 2nd Depot Bn., 2nd Quebec Regt. 1st Depot Bn., Sask. Regt.	10th Reserve Bn. 15th Reserve Bn. (absorbed 19th Res. Bn. in October 1917).	22nd Bn. 5th, 28th, 46th Bns; 1st C.M.R.
SASKATCHEWAN REGIMENT.....				

\*In March 1918 H.Q. O.M.F.C. amalgamated these two Regiments to form the "Quebec Regiment". A proposal to absorb the 10th Reserve Battalion into the 20th Reserve Battalion and distribute French-Canadian reinforcements between the 20th and 23rd Reserve Battalions was abandoned and the 10th Reserve Battalion retained its identity in the newly-organized Quebec Regiment; it became the reinforcing battalion for the 22nd Battalion. The two-regiment organization was retained in Canada, however, the 2nd Quebec Regiment being used to handle French-Canadian reinforcements.

British Columbia's representation at the front was adjusted in a different way. In August 1917 two battalions originally recruited in that province (the 54th and 102nd), which were now being kept up to strength by reinforcements from Ontario, were transferred from the British Columbia Regiment to the 2nd Central Ontario Regiment.<sup>113</sup> While this procedure may have jolted provincial pride, there seems little doubt that the personnel of the battalions concerned found this paper transfer, which kept their unit intact, decidedly preferable to the separation from their comrades that would have come with the disbandment of their battalion and their dispersal among other units.<sup>114</sup> Recalling "the heart burnings there were when certain Battalions were completely broken up last spring", Lieut.-General Currie, himself a British Columbian, was convinced that the decision to transfer battalions was wise. "We have accomplished the same purpose this time, but we have not broken up the battalions".<sup>115</sup>

### **University Companies and Battalions**

A special group of infantry replacements that went overseas during 1915 and 1916 were the University Companies which were raised to reinforce Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. The first of these was originally earmarked for a different role. In January 1915 the Department of Militia and Defence granted authority for McGill University to provide a complete overseas company for the 38th Battalion, C.E.F., which was being mobilized in Ottawa. The date of mobilization of the company was arranged to allow undergraduates to complete the College term ending on 1 May. Early in May the company went to Niagara-on-the-Lake to join the summer training of the McGill and Toronto contingents of the Canadian Officers' Training Corps.<sup>116</sup>

While the 38th Battalion was still forming, the War Office, which was concerned about the shortage of officer material in its own forces, made representations to the Canadian Government that the McGill Company should be organized as an officers' training company rather than become part of an infantry battalion.<sup>117</sup> The British suggestion reached the Governor General in June, by which time the Canadian Government had found a new role for the McGill Company - but not that recommended by the War Office. As the United Kingdom authorities were later to be told, the Militia Department was experiencing no difficulty in obtaining officers for the Canadian Expeditionary Force.<sup>118</sup> But the urgent demand made at the end of April for infantry reinforcements had to be met (above, p. 223). On 29 May the McGill Company, now designated No. 1 University Company, with a strength of six officers and 250 men, sailed for overseas as a reinforcing draft for the P.P.C.L.I.<sup>119</sup> The 38th Battalion, as we have seen (above, p. 24 and note) was to serve in Bermuda, England, and France.

Five more University Companies were raised to provide reinforcements for the Patricias. All were mobilized at McGill, but were recruited from a number of Canadian universities. They were composed of "Graduates or Undergraduates

of Universities or their friends".<sup>120</sup> Nos. 2 to 5 University Companies proceeded overseas at intervals between June 1915 and April 1916. Thus the first four companies had joined the P.P.C.L.I. in France before the heavy fighting in June 1916. "They saved the Regiment from practical extinction", writes the Patricias' historian, "... and it was they who beat the Württembergers in Sanctuary Wood ...". No. 5 University Company came to the P.P.C.L.I. after Sanctuary Wood, in time to rebuild the battalion's shattered strength.<sup>121</sup> No. 6 University Company was never quite completed; its personnel went overseas in a succession of small drafts.<sup>122</sup>

Besides these University Companies, two C.E.F. battalions were raised and were permitted to include in their designations the names of Universities. They were the 196th (Western Universities) Battalion and the 253rd (Queen's University) Highland Battalion. Recruits for the former came largely from the Universities of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, and Brandon College. The 253rd Battalion, however, had little connection with Queen's except for its name, drawing its personnel from the general public. The 196th Battalion reached England in November 1916, and the 253rd in the following May. Both were broken up in the United Kingdom and absorbed into Reserve Battalions.

Undoubtedly it was unsound to use valuable potential officer material in this way.\* This fact had been realized earlier by the War Office, but the impact of the shortage of officer material for the Canadian Corps was not realized until later. Unit Commanders found it very difficult to induce their highly educated men to allow their names to go forward for commissions. The great majority preferred to remain in their units with their comrades.

### **Canadian Base Units in France**

The first Canadian administrative unit to be established in France was the Canadian Section, G.H.Q., 3rd Echelon, which began functioning in March 1915 as a section of the Deputy Adjutant General's Office at the Base at Rouen. It was responsible for the preparation of unit Part II Orders, which reflected every circumstance affecting the service or pay of officers and soldiers serving in the field. Acting on reports received from units, the Canadian Section demanded through British Army channels reinforcements from the Canadian Training Divisions in the United Kingdom.

Since, as we have noted, no Canadian Base Depot had been established in France when the 1st Division crossed the Channel, Canadian reinforcements had to pass through the British No. 3 Base Depot at Harfleur (Le Havre) on their way to join units in the field. This arrangement continued until 27 September 1915, when the British Depot was absorbed into the Canadian Base Depot. This Depot though staffed by Canadian personnel remained under British control, and until 1917 the Officer Commanding had no direct communication with the

\* This mistake was not repeated in the Second World War.

Canadian authorities in the United Kingdom or at home in Canada. Even the Canadian Section, G.H.Q., 3rd Echelon at Rouen could only deal with the Canadian Base Depot through the Officer Commanding Reinforcements, Le Havre—a British appointment.

By the end of August 1916 the Canadian Base Depot was handling reinforcements for the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, the four Canadian infantry divisions, Corps troops and Line of Communication units. During that month it received 8962 reinforcements from the United Kingdom and dispatched 7567 to units in the field.<sup>123</sup> In the following May the Depot was transferred from Le Havre to Etaples (on the Channel coast, fifteen miles south of Boulogne). For greater efficiency in control and the maintenance of discipline, and because the existing accommodation at Etaples suited such an arrangement, the Canadian Base Depot was reorganized into five independent Depots - the Canadian General Base Depot (to handle all except infantry reinforcements) and Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 Canadian Infantry Base Depots. The summer of 1917 saw the institution of a Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp,\* which was to hold near the front reinforcements to the extent of 100 per infantry battalion and ten per cent of other arms.<sup>124</sup> Its existence materially reduced the number of reinforcements retained at the Base. As a result it was possible, in April 1918, to amalgamate the Infantry Base Depots into a single Canadian Infantry Base Depot, the Canadian General Base Depot continuing to deal with non-infantry reinforcements.<sup>125</sup>

### **The 5th Canadian Division**

One of the factors complicating the reinforcement situation was the earmarking of battalions in the United Kingdom for a 5th and possibly a 6th Canadian Division to which the Minister of Militia had committed Canada during the summer of 1916 (above, p. 218). By the autumn of that year most of the infantry battalions for these two divisions had been selected from units in England and the appointment of a divisional and brigade commanders was under consideration.<sup>126</sup> As we have seen, however, in October the heavy losses at the Somme led the Acting Sub-Militia Council to recommend making available as reinforcements all personnel of these battalions except their headquarters, and replenishing them with future drafts from Canada.<sup>127</sup> But Sir Sam Hughes was more concerned with raising new divisions than reinforcing existing ones. “Stand firm”, he told General Carson. “Let our Divisions have rest. I cannot comprehend sending troops through undestroyed wire entanglements. Surely Byng cannot repeat June 3rd† every month or two.”

There the matter rested until 27 October, when the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, noting that the necessary battalions were available, asked that the

\* The Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp replaced the Canadian Entrenching Group, whose four Entrenching Battalions had been maintained in the forward area to carry out the construction and repair of roads, tramlines, railways, gun positions, dug-outs and similar duties, as well as to furnish drafts to Infantry, Pioneer and Engineer units in the field. These dual functions proved incompatible, and the battalions were disbanded a year after being formed.

† An allusion to the Battle of Mount Sorrel.

Canadian Government authorize the Militia Sub-Council to proceed with mobilization of the 5th Division. But the Cabinet withheld its approval, the Canadian Prime Minister being advised by Sir George Perley that it would be difficult for Canada to reinforce five divisions.<sup>128</sup>

The C.I.G.S. continued to press. In a letter to Perley on New Year's Day 1917 he wrote: "It will be a great pity if this division remains idle in this country while defensive battles are being fought in France." Finally a conference held at the War Office on 12 January brought a compromise. The 5th Canadian Division would not go to France, but its establishment would be completed so that it might assume a role of home defence in the United Kingdom. The War Office asked that no drafts be taken from the Division when other sufficiently trained men were available.<sup>129</sup>

The new division concentrated at Witley, in Surrey where, on 13 February 1917, Major-General Garnet B. Hughes (promoted from commanding the 1st Canadian Brigade in France) assumed command. Its original composition in infantry was as follows: 13th Brigade, 128th, 134th, 160th and 202nd Battalions; 14th Brigade, 125th 150th, 156th and 161st Battalions; 15th Brigade, 104th, 119th, 185th and 199th Battalions. In August the Divisional Artillery (the 13th and 14th Field Brigades and four mortar batteries) went to France, where it served until the end of the war as an additional divisional artillery within the Canadian Corps. The Division's Machine Gun Companies (17th, 18th and 19th) subsequently served in France, as did the companies (13th, 14th and 15th) of the Divisional Engineers. On 9 February 1918 Headquarters O.M.F.C. ordered the remainder of the division broken up to provide additional men for units in the field (below, p. 232).<sup>130</sup>

After October 1916 the matter of forming a sixth division in England was dropped. The reluctance of the Canadian Cabinet to send even one more division to the Continent ruled out any thought of raising further field divisions. Yet the possibility of having six Canadian divisions in France did receive brief attention early in 1918, but in different circumstances from the foregoing. In January a serious shortage of reinforcements resulting from the heavy losses at Passchendaele brought an order from the War Cabinet to reduce to three the number of battalions in each British infantry brigade; personnel of the battalion thus made surplus were used to bring the other three battalions up to establishment.<sup>131</sup> A proposal by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff for a similar reorganization in the Canadian Corps in order to form two additional divisions was strongly opposed by the Corps Commander.

In a letter to the Canadian Overseas Minister, Lieut.-General Currie pointed out that the conditions necessitating the change in British formations did not exist in the four Canadian divisions, which were up to strength and had sufficient reinforcements in sight for some time to come. There was therefore no need to break up any units, and a reorganization along British lines would leave twenty surplus battalions. While it was true that with the addition of six battalions from England two new divisions could be formed, the resulting six divisions would be more than a single corps headquarters could handle. It would

be necessary to organize into two corps of three divisions each, “with the corollary of a Force Headquarters to command and administer them.”<sup>132</sup> Currie agreed that not only would this break up a fighting machine of proved efficiency, but such a reorganization would involve the creation of six new brigade staffs, and headquarters staffs for two new divisions, a new Corps and a Canadian Army. All this, the Corps Commander insisted, would be “increasing out of all proportion the overhead charges” and marked the suggestion as “unbusinesslike”, particularly since with this large increase in staff officers the Canadian hitting power would be expanded by only six new battalions from England having an actual fighting strength of 3600\* men. Instead of reorganizing along British lines Currie recommended that each of the 48 infantry battalions in the Canadian Corps be authorized to carry 100 men surplus to establishment. Such an arrangement would, he maintained, increase the fighting strength of the Corps by 1200 more men without an increase in staffs, battalion headquarters or transport. Currie concluded his representations to Sir Edward Kemp by expressing his firmest convictions that no good business reason nor “any good military reason” existed for carrying out the reorganization proposed by the British.<sup>133</sup>

The Overseas Minister and General Turner agreed to Currie’s proposal, and approval was given by Sir Douglas Haig’s headquarters to the plan permitting each infantry battalion in the Canadian Corps to exceed its establishment by 100 men. On 9 February eleven battalions of the 5th Canadian Division were ordered to furnish drafts of 100 men each to the units in the field.<sup>134</sup> Disbandment of the division<sup>†</sup> followed. This overposting was to continue until the middle of the Second Battle of Arras (26 August - 3 September). Even without it Canadian divisions were to hold a marked superiority in manpower over the corresponding British formations-in round numbers relative strengths, including divisional troops, were 15,000 for a British infantry division compared with 21,000 for a Canadian (American divisions had an establishment of 28,000).<sup>136</sup>

Most important of all, the decisions of February, by maintaining the Canadian Corps intact, preserved the excellent esprit de corps that made it a great fighting team, enabling it to operate with continued high efficiency in the decisive battles of the final year of the war.

\* Currie estimated that of the six battalions’ total strength of approximately 6000 men some 400 men in each unit would not be available for the fighting line because of regimental and other employment.

† Yet a further attempt was made by the War Office about the middle of 1918 to have a fifth Canadian division in France. On 21 June the Canadian Overseas Minister replied negatively to a British proposal to substitute one American for one Canadian battalion in each brigade. Canadian infantry thus made surplus, and/or “A” category men drawn from railway and forestry troops, were to have been formed into a new division.<sup>135</sup>