

DOMINION OF CANADA

In the Matter of the Public Inquiries Act

Chap. 99, R.S.C., 1927

and

In the Matter of the Commission on Relief Camps
British Columbia

REPORT

Commissioners:

HON. W. A. MACDONALD

C. T. McHATTIE, Esq.

REV. E. D. BRADEN

OTTAWA
J. O. PATENAUDE, I.S.O.,
PRINTER TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY

1935

In the Matter of the Public Inquiries Act Chap. 99, R.S.C., 1927, and In the Matter of the Commission on Relief Camps British Columbia.

*The Secretary of State of Canada,
Ottawa, Canada.*

By Order-in-Council, pursuant to Part I of the "Inquiries Act," Chap. 99, R.S.C. 1927, The Honourable W. A. Macdonald, C. T. McHattie and Rev. E. D. Braden were appointed as a Commission to inquire "into the conditions obtaining, and all and any complaints which have been made with respect to the administration and management of the camps established by the Department of National Defence in the province of British Columbia."

The commissioners, thus appointed, beg to report as follows:—

HISTORY OF RELIEF CAMPS

The history as to the establishment of relief camps in British Columbia bears upon the situation, and is interesting as to the matters referred to the commission for investigation. Approximately 200 of such camps were first opened in September, 1931, by the province of British Columbia, to provide work for the unemployed of all classes. At one time they accommodated over 6,000 men, both married and single. The married men received \$2 per diem, plus 80 cents for subsistence for their wives, while the single men received only \$2 per diem. Board was charged at the rate of 85 cents per diem. The appropriation for this undertaking was \$3,250,000. The federal and provincial governments each contributed one-half of this amount. The cost, however, was found to be excessive, and upon the appropriation being exhausted, the system was discontinued, and only single men were retained in the camps, which were conducted on a subsistence basis—the men being provided with food and lodging, and doing no work except camp fatigue. There was a period when the Dominion Government allowed \$7.50 to each man in the camps. Free board was afforded to the men, and the dominion and provincial governments each contributed one-half of the cost under this arrangement. Some clothing was supplied to the men, although there was no regular issue, except in the case of those employed on rock drilling and other special work. This expense was borne by the province.

FORDHAM COMMISSION—

In October, 1932, the camps were transferred to what was known as the Fordham Commission. This commission was appointed by the Dominion upon nomination of the province, and ceased to function on the 30th June, 1933, when the camps, which had been administered by the province, were handed over to the Department of National Defence of Canada. There were some of the camps not so dealt with at the time, and they continued to be administered by the province, on the same basis as the Fordham Commission, but were subsequently taken over by the Dominion through the Department of National Defence.

AGREEMENT RE CAMPS BETWEEN DOMINION AND PROVINCE

In 1933 the Dominion exercised its powers under the Relief Act of that year, and entered into an agreement with the province on certain terms and conditions incorporated in an agreement, dated the 21st August, 1933, and

executed by both governments. It recited that the province desired to obtain financial and other assistance in carrying out measures for the relief of distress within British Columbia. Inter alia it provided that the Dominion assume responsibility for the care of all physically fit, unmarried, homeless men, and for that purpose relief "projects" should be organized and executed, consisting of works for the general advantage of Canada, which would otherwise not have been undertaken at the time.

This agreement expired on the 31st March, 1934, and has not since been renewed. All the camp sites and buildings, with a few exceptions, are the property of, or controlled by, the province. It also owns and operates, with its own employees, practically all the motor trucks and mechanical equipment used on the works carried on by the National Defence. The association, though capable of dissolution, has, since March, 1934, been apparently continued by both governments as if the agreement were still in full force.

As these relief camps are still so operating the obligations assumed by the National Defence are enumerated as follows:—

1. Shelter, clothing and food will be provided in kind, and an allowance not exceeding 20 cents per diem for each day worked will be issued in cash.

2. Eight hours per day will be worked; Sundays and statutory holidays will be observed; and Saturday afternoons may be used for recreation.

3. Persons leaving voluntarily except for the purpose of accepting other employment offered, or for the reason that they no longer require relief, and those discharged for cause, will thereafter be ineligible for reinstatement.

4. Free transportation will be given from place of engagement and return thereto on discharge except for misconduct.

5. No military discipline or training will be instituted; the status of the personnel will remain civilian in all respects.

It is worthy of mention that in practice some of these conditions were not strictly adhered to, especially as to the hours of work, and allowance for days when no actual work was performed. Persons leaving voluntarily, even without any reason, if in good standing, were not debarred from reinstatement. Further, that during two years, out of 1,539 who had been discharged, 1,093 were reinstated. While the agreement between the governments provided for work for "physically fit, unmarried, homeless men" and necessitated operation of the camps, still the province did not fully apply it to a certain class of such men. This is clearly stated in a recently published announcement of its Premier, viz.:—

Contrary to allegations frequently made, your government does not require unemployed, single men, domiciled in British Columbia, to go to National Defence Camps for relief. All such men, without dependents, who can prove they lived in the Province prior to May 1, 1931, when relief assistance was instituted, are eligible to receive relief at their established domicile.

This relief was not applicable to Municipalities except by an agreement as to a division of the cost. The City of Vancouver failed to make such an agreement, so a number of men, young and old, resorted to Relief Camps who might otherwise have been maintained in the City at their "established domicile."

RAISON D'ÊTRE FOR APPOINTMENT OF COMMISSION

The appointment of our Commission resulted from complaints with respect to the "administration and management" of the Relief Camps in question. We were required to proceed speedily, and also to inquire into the "conditions obtaining in these Camps." We applied for a list of these complaints, so that

they might form a guide in our Inquiry, but it was not available, and we were so informed. We became satisfied that it did not exist in any concrete form, which would be useful for our purposes. Our Chairman at this time received a letter from the Secretary of the "Relief Camp Workers Union," which we thought might afford information as to such complaints. The Secretary stated that his Union was responsible for organizing the impending "walk out strike action of Relief Camp workers" on the 4th of April. He desired to know the extent of the power of the Commission "to grant the seven Demands of the Relief Camp workers on which the struggle is based," and added that the strike action would take place, as scheduled. As the cause of the walk-out, or strike, by the Relief Camp workers is of public importance, and pertinent to our Inquiry, we incorporate these demands at length:—

CAUSE OF STRIKE

DEMANDS

1. That work with wages be instituted at a minimum rate of 50 cents per hour for unskilled workers, and Trade Union rates for all skilled work, on the basis of a six hour day, five day week, with a minimum of twenty work days per month.
2. That all workers in relief camps be covered by the Compensation Act, and that adequate first aid supplies be carried on the job at all times.
3. That the National Defence and all Military control, with their system of blacklisting, where men are cut off from all means of livelihood, be abolished.
4. That democratically elected committees be recognized in every camp.
5. That there be instituted a system of non-contributory unemployment insurance, based on the "workers" bill of social and unemployment insurance.
6. That all workers be given their democratic right to vote.
7. That section 98 of the Criminal Code, sections 41-42 of the Immigration Act, vagrancy laws, and all anti-working class laws be repealed.

MAJORITY OF DEMANDS OUTSIDE SCOPE OF COMMISSION

It was apparent that the majority of these demands did not pertain to the inquiry authorized by our commission, and thus were not within the scope of our authority. They would be the subject of legislation. The Secretary of the Union was informed to that effect, and that the first public sittings of the commission would be held at Vancouver on the 4th of April.

PUBLIC MEETINGS HELD

This meeting was held in due course, and some evidence adduced. We sent notices to be posted in camps operating in military district No. 11, inviting complaints to be presented to the commission. We visited and inspected the majority of the relief camps in British Columbia, with the object of hearing complaints and obtaining first hand knowledge as to their condition. We held public meetings at the camps, and almost invariably inspected the dining rooms, kitchens, wash rooms, bunk houses, store rooms, meat houses and other buildings. At these meetings we encouraged men, in the absence of the superintendents and foremen, to freely state their complaints and grievances. We listened to many complaints which, while important to the individual, were personal, and had no general application to the camps, or even the particular camp then in

question. We were, in some instances, enabled to adjust them at the time, though foreign to the inquiry. Some of the complaints were trivial, and did not necessitate consideration, but on the whole, amongst the men remaining in the camps after the strike, the complaints were reasonably submitted. In the absence of the particulars of the complaints, we questioned all witnesses as to matters which were likely to create a grievance in camp life, such as food, cooking, sleeping accommodation, sanitation, medical attention, recreation, consideration of complaints and other matters. This course was intended to so direct the minds of the men that they might, if the facts warranted, contradict their foreman, or make any appropriate complaints. We almost invariably invited the men at the close of our meetings to forward any additional complaints to our chairman, but only one or two complaints were subsequently presented. We examined a great many witnesses, and thus obtained a large amount of oral and documentary evidence, some of which may now appear immaterial. This, coupled with knowledge obtained by inspection, enables us to make findings within the purview of our commission.

SCHEME

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION—GROUPS—PROJECTS—CAMPS

When the National Defence took over the relief camps which had been operated by the province, they adopted and followed the then existing scheme of highway construction. It was supplemented or amended by the Provincial Government engineers from time to time. It also continued the construction of its Airports.

The set-up of the scheme for the highway construction was to divide this work into "groups", with a superintendent in charge of each group; then to divide such groups into "projects". The projects were then subdivided into different camps, with a foreman in charge. There was also an engineer attached to each group, and in some cases an Administration Officer. The greater portion of the province was administered by the Commanding Officer of District No. 11 and his staff, with headquarters at Victoria, B.C., while a small portion of the province in East and West Kootenay was administered by the Commanding Officer, with headquarters at Calgary, Alberta. The quantity and quality of the work done with respect to these projects is a subject for consideration by the Engineering Department. We observed, however, that a quantity of work had been done, and it appeared to be in connection with the projects which would be for the benefit of the people. We learned that, aside from tending to bring about the "strike", there was, through extensive agitation in these camps, a marked falling off in the efficiency of the work performed during the past six months.

DISTRICT COMMANDING OFFICERS

We are quite satisfied that the officers commanding these Military Districts properly performed their duties in administering and managing these camps, and that they acted with fairness and ability in discharging a new and difficult task.

SUPERINTENDENTS

The superintendents of the different groups all possess an engineering standing. In most cases they were accustomed to dealing with men in similar work, and in former times received an average of \$250 per month. They are now being paid a maximum of \$100 per month. We contacted all the superintendents, and from the results obtained in their work, they appeared quite competent. When you consider the responsibility borne, the nature of the duties performed, the difficulty of maintaining discipline, and the nature of the

employment of the thousands in these camps, then, almost without exception, they filled their positions satisfactorily. They all, apparently, realized the effect of the depression, and in this respect accepted the situation. In this connection the men advanced as a cause for discontent, and complained to us at working for 20 cents a day, as they termed it, beside truck drivers who were receiving from the Provincial Government over \$80 per month. As to the superintendents, while not complaining, this situation was emphasized, as the shovel operators employed by the province were receiving \$115 per month, as compared with the superintendents in control of operations in a number of camps receiving \$100 per month.

COMPLAINTS

SUPERINTENDENTS—ADMINISTRATION

While we were not supplied with formal complaints against any of the superintendents, still, they developed during our investigation with respect to two of the superintendents.

Complaints regarding the administration of Group "C" by the superintendent, were received. This superintendent is well recognized as a competent construction engineer, and the complaints made against him referred more particularly to matters of discipline, and charges of undue severity and autocracy. We were satisfied that he had a most difficult task to perform as superintendent, as the Princeton District, where these camps are located, is a well known trouble area. The camps are adjacent to the town of Princetown, which is a recognized labour centre, with strong radical tendencies. It was a situation which required firmness on the part of the superintendent. If it were not that we have learned that the project of the "Hope-Princeton Road" is considered of primary importance, we would take the liberty of questioning the advisability of maintaining relief camps in a district so subject to disturbance. Bearing in mind the difficulties encountered by the superintendent in dealing with the camps in that district, and under all the circumstances, we are not disposed to make any adverse criticism of this superintendent. We might suggest, however, that all officials serving under him would be wisely and carefully chosen, in order that the burden of administration should not fall too heavily on the superintendent.

Complaints were also received with respect to the superintendent of Group "D". His competency as an engineer was not called in question. The complaints concerned provision and consideration for comfort of the men, the condition of the camps, and the manner in which he investigated complaints. There was considerable contradiction in the evidence with respect to these complaints. Where there was no corroboration of statements to the contrary we accepted the evidence given by the superintendent, but he failed to satisfy us that he had taken proper steps in October, 1934, to provide for the advent of more than 100 men in the Sorrento Camp (No. 378). The manner in which he investigated the complaint as to "moonshine" made at the Mara Lake Camp (418) showed a lack of judgment, though he may have honestly formed the opinion that the complaint was based upon a "plant" against the cook or store-keeper at that camp. While appreciating the difficulties met by a superintendent in dealing with foremen, as well as the men generally, in the camps, we thought it proper that we should thus express our views with respect to these complaints in Group "D". They come within the scope of "administration", and we refer them to the proper authorities for their consideration.

Several witnesses complained that mail in group "C" had been tampered with. We gave particular attention to these complaints in order to learn if there was any power given to officials of the National Defence to supervise mail, or if there had been any illegal interference with the mail of any of the men. We learned that the National Defence officials had no such power, and that any such action would be illegal. We find that the charges were not supported by evidence.

FOREMEN

The foremen engaged in the different camps were, in many instances, accustomed to railway, logging and other camps employing labor. They had a difficult situation in dealing with the workmen in question. If they had been employed by the day, on a "work and wages" proposition, the foreman, even without cause, could discharge them at any time, and thus control their actions. The men in these camps, however, were in an entirely different position. They had, in their distress and unemployment, voluntarily resorted to the camps for purposes of relief, and were entitled to a different treatment. Under these peculiar circumstances it appeared to us that the foreman, as a whole, acted properly and patiently. Generally they preserved their authority and exercised discipline. In many cases they seemed to have the complete confidence of the men. We were informed that it is the policy of the department that the amount of work done is not the primary consideration in the camps. Further, that experience shows that the men in those camps which show the best record of work are the more contented and healthier than in camps where little work is accomplished. There were complaints against certain foremen, and in some instances they appeared well founded, but have no general application to the "conditions obtaining in the camps." They will doubtless be dealt with by their superior officers, who are aware of the foremen, to whom we are directing their attention. We might add that if any good purpose would be served we might refer to these men more specifically.

MILITARIZATION

One of the "demands" which might be treated as a complaint is that all military control be abolished. This involves the consideration and decision as to whether, while the National Defence, as required by the Relief Act, 1934, controls these Relief Camps, they are militarized. If it existed, it would be a complaint against the administration, and contrary to the letter and spirit of one of the conditions in the agreement between the Dominion and the Province, as confirmed in a subsequent letter of Major General McNaughton's dealing with these camps.

While there was some evidence offered upon this point at the first sittings of the commission, it more especially applied to Macaulay Point Camp, and was subsequently contradicted at a sittings at this camp. Questions were continually submitted at the public sittings, as to the existence of any militarization in these camps. We feel no hesitation in reporting that it did not, and does not, exist in the slightest degree.

COMPLAINT OF ADMINISTRATION CLERICAL STAFF AT HEADQUARTERS

There was a complaint in the Administration Offices at Work Point Barracks, Victoria. A number of the clerical staff complained of their remuneration and lack of promotion. They are in receipt of a minimum allowance of \$20 per month, with bed and board, in an exceptionally good bunk house, with a monthly allowance of \$3 towards the purchase of their own clothing; also tobacco allowance. They could go to Victoria any evening, as their work was adjacent to that city. While some adjustment of their conditions might be made, not entailing additional expense, we do not think, especially in these times, that they had any real grievance.

CONDITIONS OBTAINING IN CAMPS

We were required by our commission to inquire into the conditions obtaining in these Relief Camps. We have given this request a liberal interpretation, and applied it to conditions existing, or which had existed, during a reasonable period, before our appointment, and which might form a subject of complaint.

The procedure by which a person sought and obtained relief at these camps consisted in his signing an application, reciting his qualifications and understanding of the terms and conditions under which he entered the Relief Camp. Many such persons, in making their application, were aware of the conditions obtaining in the camps, as to subsistence, clothing, accommodation, medical and hospital treatment, as they had been in other camps operated in a similar manner. Some of them had been in a number of these camps—one person having been in fourteen of them.

FOOD

We first considered the food supplied in the camps. This, as in all camps, is very often the focal point of complaints. Some of the men, principally those who had gone out on strike, said that the food was "rotten." We had visited and eaten meals at many of the camps before this evidence was adduced, and were surprised at such broad statements. From time to time during our visit to 46 camps, and examination of 277 witnesses, we consistently investigated this important feature of camp life, and became satisfied that the meals which had been, and were being, served to the men were good then, and had been so long prior to our visits. We felt convinced that there were thousands of families in Canada (some on relief and some on the edge of relief) who would have been pleased to partake of such meals. Occasionally bad cooking may have spoiled good food. Upon this point we were pleased to learn that there is now established a school of cooking at Point Grey Camp (No. 200) to train men for cooking in the camps, particularly having in view the limited ration allowance. We collected a number of menus of the meals usually served, and these will be filed with the report. Some of them were verified under oath. We think it would be interesting to insert one of these menus, as follows:

Camp 406, Project 56.

Princeton, B.C.

Breakfast: Cream of Wheat, Hot Cakes and Syrup, Bacon, Fried Potatoes, Toast, Stewed Figs, Jam, White and Brown Bread and Butter, Coffee;

Dinner: Soup, Roast Beef and Brown Gravy, Potatoes, Parsnips, Apple Pie, White and Brown Bread and Butter, Tea and Coffee;

Supper: Canned Corned Beef, Cold Roast Beef, Combination Salad, Fried Potatoes, Fried Parsnips, Loganberries, Cakes, Cookies, White and Brown Bread and Butter, Tea.

In thus approving of the meals that were supplied, we should make a reservation as to the milk and meat. The former was not satisfactory in many of the camps, but has now been remedied.

The meat was a subject of controversy at many of the camps. We paid particular attention to this article of food, as, aside from the desirability of having it up to the proper standard, it forms an important factor in determining the ration allowance for each camp, being practically over one-third of the cost of the total daily ration. We obtained a copy of one of the existing meat contracts, and find care has been taken to provide for a proper supply of meat. It was required to be of the best quality, and fulfil other important essentials. If a tender accepted upon these specifications, were adhered to, there could not have been any reasonable complaint. On the contrary, we find that upon several occasions, the strictness, which should have been applied in requiring fulfilment of the terms of the contract, was neglected. The meat was not up to specifications, and thus formed a just cause of complaint. When we called attention to the neglect, it was offered as an excuse in not returning the meat, that there

was no facility for keeping it until it could be returned to the contractor, but this might be overcome in some way, or substitutes used, until a fresh supply was received. As the contracts are let monthly, a contractor who is persistent in neglecting performance might well be refused further contracts. Comment was repeatedly made during the sittings upon this portion of the food supply, in addition to the general complaint as to lack of variety.

SLEEPING ACCOMMODATION

There has been for months an excess of sleeping accommodation in the camps. This is due to the usual reduction in numbers in the spring, but more especially arises from the recent strike. There is winter accommodation in the camps of British Columbia for 8,435 men, being one-third of the entire accommodation for the Dominion. On the 31st March, 1935, the strength was 6,060, and on the 1st of May this number fell to 3,471. In Military District No. 11 we are informed that there are only 500 less men now in the camps than at this time last year.

There was a complaint made as to the beds, but this has been remedied, although an objection still exists in some of the camps. Sufficient blankets are supplied, but a reasonable request was submitted that, as summer approaches, there might be an issue of cotton sheets, which would be washed by the men receiving them.

CLEANLINESS

Our inspection of the dining rooms, kitchens, bunk houses and store rooms, generally speaking, satisfied us as to their cleanliness. This was especially true of the kitchens. We were not surprised that with such a large number of bunk houses vermin was complained of. This occurred in a few of them, but steps were being taken to cope with the situation. Cleanliness was a characteristic of the men in the camps.

In Point Grey Camp (200) rats have become a menace, more particularly in the bunk houses. It did not appear that adequate measures were being adopted to abate this nuisance. Our reference to this matter we presume will ensure prompt and effective attention.

After we had visited the camps, complaint was made at a sittings held on our return, that double flooring was requisite in the bunk houses. Except in one instance, this had not been drawn to our attention. We refer to this matter so that, if deemed advisable, an inspection of the flooring in all of the buildings might take place, with a view of determining whether double flooring is necessary.

SANITATION

Generally speaking we found the sanitation good throughout the camps. This was reflected in the wonderfully good health which prevailed. Incidentally we might mention that there was one case of typhoid fever reported. There were some minor unsanitary conditions which, upon being drawn to our attention, were immediately, upon our suggestion, remedied.

As to Point Grey Camp (200), the men properly complained as to the unsanitary condition of the latrines and cess pools; also want of cleanliness in the washhouse and showers. We found that these were disgraceful—crude, unsightly and dirty. The wash basins were worn and chipped, and should have been discarded. All these essentials should be renovated, if not completely replaced.

WATER SUPPLY

The water supply in the camps was good, and was tested by the attending doctor at stated periods. There was only one case where precaution against possible contamination seemed necessary, and this course has been adopted. If Sunnyside Camp (206) is not moved at an early date we think a better water supply should be afforded.

LIGHT

There was some complaint as to the light supplied, but we think, in most cases, it was fairly satisfactory. There is danger attached to the use of light in wooden buildings, and care should necessarily be exercised. In some camps electric light was supplied, while in others, where the power lines were adjacent, it has not been adopted. The lack of permanency in the camp, or disproportionate cost, may, however, be the reason for not using electric light.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL ATTENTION

The medical care, referred to in General McNaughton's letter, outlining establishment of the camps, was arranged by contracts with doctors practising near the camps. The complaints, as to any lack of attention or neglect of the camps by the doctors, were few in number. Where they appeared grave enough to investigate, we did so, and found them not substantiated by evidence.

There were complaints that the regulations as to dental attention only provided for extractions, and that men who had lost their teeth, or required fillings, when working in the camps, were not afforded any relief.

Then the men also complained that there was no means afforded for obtaining eye-glasses, except replacement from breakage while working.

TOBACCO ISSUE

The question of the issue of tobacco is a grievance in every camp, and a cause of constant trouble to the Supervisory staff. The original issue of tobacco was set when tobacco was available at 40 cents per pound. The cost of tobacco has since risen to \$1.17, but the allowable cost of the tobacco issue has been raised only from 1.3 cents per day to 1.45 cents. With the increasing tobacco price the issue has successively dropped. It is difficult for the foremen or storemen to combat the grievance thus caused.

When a man enters a camp without tobacco, or money wherewith to purchase it, he must go without it for three or four days, or until he has been in camp sufficiently long to cover the cost of a packet of tobacco at 1.45 cents per day. It was submitted that an issue of tobacco by quantity, rather than as now by cost, regardless of the fluctuation in price of that commodity—the system originally in force—would be fairer, and would prove more satisfactory.

MENTAL ATTITUDE

Apart from any alleged causes of physical discomfort, poor food or living conditions, a clearly defined, and openly expressed, mental attitude in respect to the camps on the part of the men has developed during the years of their maintenance, and is the outstanding cause of unrest and dissatisfaction.

ABSENCE OF WAGE

Camp life, generally speaking, is not a normal condition under which men desire to live. Men are attracted to mining, logging and construction camps because of a wage paid for labour. It was pointed out by the men that usually there is some goal at the end of a period of employment, and men put up with the discomforts and lack of social contacts associated with camp life because, in due course, there will be a substantial pay cheque, and a way open to some other form of living. It was contended that in the case of Relief Camps the absence of a wage rendered a future opportunity of leaving the camps with any considerable amount of money impossible, and that, as the months passed by, the men drifted into either an attitude of hopeless indifference or of studied rebellion. We are satisfied that this state of mind is a fruitful field for exploitation by the agitator and trouble maker.

UNSUITABLE EMPLOYMENT

Many men who are forced by circumstances to go to Relief Camps are utterly unfitted for either the type of life involved or the work expected to be done. Many have been trained in various trades or professions and find themselves utterly unsuited to the manner of life in the camps, or to the tasks given them to do.

YOUNG MEN

A considerable percentage of the men are young, many of them under twenty-one years of age. Their education has been interrupted, their training in various mechanical trades has been terminated, or their progress in office or mercantile work has ceased. In many cases these youths have left comfortable homes, or homes now on city or government relief in order that the burden at home might be lightened. Under ordinary circumstances many of these young men would not go at any time to these camps. They naturally grow rebellious over the apparent hopelessness of their position, and the loss of years in which they might be fitting themselves for higher positions in life. In this connection we draw attention to a portion of the letter of Major-General McNaughton, already referred to, when the camps were established, as follows:—

Officers in charge of projects are responsible for the care of the men placed under their supervision, and it will be their object to ensure that their efficiency—mentally, physically and at their trades—is improved so that when conditions permit they may be returned to the economic life of the country well able to again take up their usual work. To assist in this, educational and instructional classes will be organized....

FORGOTTEN MEN

A growing conviction seems to have entered the minds of most of the men that they are a forgotten group. The isolation of many of the camps renders it impossible for men to keep in touch personally with former employment or with new work opening up. It is true that the Provincial Labour Bureau does seek to bring men in camps to the attention of employers, and that the department will furnish transportation to men going to bona fide positions, yet the employment of men from the Relief Camps is so rare that a fixed idea prevails among the men that they are deemed unsuitable for employment, and are shunned by those seeking workmen. We did not find evidence to substantiate this opinion, but are convinced that such a feeling exists in the minds of the men, and adds very greatly to their unrest and dissatisfaction.

CLOTHING ISSUE

A great deal of dissatisfaction was expressed relative to the clothing issue. Very little complaint was made regarding the quality or standard of issue, with the exception of a natural distaste on the part of the men to accept clothing used by men previously, and turned in by them on leaving. Fear of disease also plays a part in the dislike of used clothing. We found that in many camps the issue of used clothing is now restricted to outer garments and boots, and we were assured that all clothing and blankets used by men suffering from contagious diseases is burned. The opinion of the men was that if a larger cash allowance were given and the men required to purchase their own clothing, there would be much less criticism, and a possible saving to the government. This involves a question of policy in the administration of the camps, and is a matter for consideration by the National Defence. We think it not out of place, however, to express our opinion that in the final analysis such an uncontrollable allowance would not be beneficial to the men utilizing these camps.

We might well refer to a regular "racket" which has been too prevalent in the camps. A man enters a camp, draws his clothing allowance, then leaves camp with the new clothes and sells his outfit at a reduced price for cash. He then applies for entry to another camp under his own name, or an assumed name, if necessary. He then repeats the operation, with the attendant expense to the country. We learn that steps are now being taken to prevent a continuance of this procedure.

ISOLATION OF CAMPS

The projects on which work is being carried on, and in the vicinity of which camps are located, are, in many instances, in very isolated places. Some camps are located where mountains rise on all sides, and there is not even sufficient level ground for any form of sports. Owing to the lack of transportation it is impossible for the men to reach any nearby community, or to participate in any form of social or community life. The absence of all social contacts and the lack of any change of environment cannot fail to produce a sense of isolation and loneliness, with a consequent depressing mental attitude.

RECREATION

A general complain was voiced in all camps visited regarding inadequate recreation facilities and appointments. Recreation was referred to by Major-General McNaughton in his "Policy of Administration," as follows: "Recreation, amusements and games will be arranged...." Most of the camps have recreation halls, and where not now existing we found that they were being planned. Many of them are poorly lighted, and there would seem to be great difficulty in keeping any adequate and constant supply of cards, games, etc. Most camps have libraries, the books in all cases being used books donated through individuals, churches, clubs and public libraries. Constant complaint was made as to the lack of change made in these somewhat meagre libraries. In some cases books were packed and ready for changing for weeks or months with no action being taken. Magazines and papers are received as donations. Complaint was made of too many women's magazines and too many very old magazines. When one remembers that during the long winter months most of these camps are almost completely isolated, and that weather conditions leave very many days with no possibility of work, it is easy to realize the large part that better recreation arrangements plays in the contentment of the men. Some of the camps have radios—many have not. Some of these have been donated, but others have been bought by contributions from the men or canteen profits. Tubes and batteries wear out, and there are no funds to replace them. The installation and maintenance of a radio in each camp would be a worthy attainment. Lectures or entertainments, except in a very limited way, were not provided.

Some of the camps have level places where games might be played. Many of the younger men are keenly interested in sport. Lack of equipment for playing games is apparent almost everywhere, and we feel that greater attention paid to all matters of recreation in the camps would lead to more enjoyment and better directed leisure time among the men.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION

Complaints were presented in a number of camps by persons who were injured while at work. We discussed each of these cases, and were impressed with the desirability of relief being afforded. The difficulty was that the Provincial Workmen's Compensation Act was not applicable. We explained the situation to Major-General Ashton, D.O.C., and were pleased to learn from him that the matter had received consideration, and was being favourably dealt

with by the Department of National Defence. As this question is quite important, and is referred to in the seven "demands," we deem it advisable to quote somewhat at length from General Ashton's evidence, as follows:—

The present arrangement is that every case of accident is reported to Ottawa the moment it occurs. Then continual reports are sent to Ottawa until it reaches finality. Then we get the opinion of the doctor in charge as to whether the man has any permanent disability, and that is also forwarded to Ottawa. . . .

Now, the arrangement with Ottawa is that every one of those cases have to be treated on compassionate grounds, as individual cases, and there are a number of them down there now under consideration. . . .

The cases are finally disposed of by a special order in council to give that man whatever is advised to be the proper thing. . . .

Ottawa, for instance, has taken this action. In a number of cases they have asked us to obtain from the Workmen's Compensation Board an assessment of what heading that comes under under the Workmen's Compensation Act, and what they would recommend, and that has gone to Ottawa. . . .

The government definitely says that all cases for compensation for injury must be dealt with as a compassionate allowance under special order in council.

We think that these extracts fully cover the ground, and that the course to be adopted will afford a satisfactory remedy. We will, in due course, forward all complaints we have received for consideration and adjustment.

COMPLAINTS AS TO UNDUE SEVERITY

We investigated complaints relating to several young men, who had been sentenced to jail for the theft of clothing, particularly boots. It was found that some men would register at a camp, be outfitted, and then leave the camp before the expiration of twenty-one days. This was a period fixed by practice, enabling a man to leave camp and be entitled to retain his clothing, including boots. In some cases men were discharged, or left within a few days of entering camp. In all such cases the men concerned are, by the regulations, ordered to turn in new clothing or boots which have been issued. If necessary, used boots are given them to enable them to travel. In order to check the "racket" in clothing, referred to elsewhere in the report, orders were given that men wrongfully retaining boots or clothing which were the property of the government, should be proceeded against. We found that in each case reported to us, the men concerned were fully warned of the result if they retained the property in question, and that charges were laid only after they had persisted in taking the articles from the camp. We found that charges were laid by foremen, or others, on instructions from headquarters, and that all men were fully warned, and every effort made to have them turn in the articles concerned. All arrests were made by the Provincial Police, fair trials were held, and sentences were imposed by Provincial Magistrates. In no cases were appeals taken from sentences, by the prisoners or through their friends, even for reduction of sentences, though this could have been done without cost. It was submitted that the sentences were too severe in some cases, but this was a matter outside the National Defence, and which we did not deem it proper to consider, much less to pass upon.

SUMMATION

The object of the establishment of Relief Camps is clearly indicated by Major-General McNaughton in the Manual of "Policy and Instructions", available in every camp, as follows:—

As a measure designed to care for single, homeless men without present employment, and in need of relief, the Department of National Defence has been entrusted with the organization and execution of a series of projects on works to the general advantage of Canada which otherwise would not have been undertaken at this time. . . .

We find these camps have reasonably fulfilled the object of their establishment, and afforded the intended relief. It is well known that they were expected to be only of a temporary nature. The reason of their continuance is the prolonged depression, and we hope that this cause will soon disappear. In the meantime, while recognizing that it is not within the power of this Commission to make recommendations, regarding the policy of the government as to Relief Camps, we call attention to certain points very clearly revealed by the evidence, viz:—

The chief ground for discontent and unrest was the absence of an adequate wage for workers in the camps. We remark on this point, that it should be remembered the policy of paying wages was not contemplated when the camps were organized.

The grave fear that morale and incentive gradually disappear with the continuance of these camps.

The difficulty of men in Relief Camps, owing to isolation, keeping in touch with the labour market with a view to possible employment.

The allocation to camps of boys and young men with no sufficient opportunity afforded, by education or otherwise, to fit them for useful employment. Upon this point we should refer to Correspondence classes having been arranged by the Provincial Department of Education, and Schools operated at camps 104, 203 and 422.

It was repeatedly stated that an allowance of three cents per day per man, over and above the prescribed ration, would provide the necessary variety in food desired by the men.

They submitted that a quantity ration of tobacco instead of a money ration, or a slight increase of the per diem cash allowance, with the abolition of the tobacco issue, would satisfactorily deal with the matter of the tobacco issue.

They sought to have a leave of absence periodically for men who had given continued service, together with reasonable transportation. This, they stated, would give them an opportunity to retain social contacts and seek employment.

The establishment of canteens in all camps, especially in isolated districts, where it is not possible to purchase in local stores.

Arrangements made by which camp trucks might be used to convey men to and from sporting events and entertainments.

Complaint was made that greater attention should be given to the carrying out of Par. 57 of the Book of Policy and Instructions, under which Relief Camps are administered, referring to "Recreational Facilities". The evidence suggested certain improvements, viz:—

The maintenance and equipment of suitable recreation halls, adequately lighted, in all camps.

PUBLIC INQUIRIES ACT

That a radio should be part of standard equipment, installed and maintained in every camp by the Department of Defence.

A supply by the department, or by public subscription, of equipment for seasonal out-door sports, and indoor amusements.

More frequent changing of libraries and replacement of books, and a more adequate supply of magazines and other literature.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

Dated at Vancouver, B.C., May 31st, 1935.

W. A. MACDONALD,
Chairman.

C. T. McHATTIE.

E. D. BRADEN.