

4-26-2012

Sir Arthur Currie and the Legacy of the Great War: Letters from the Archives of the Canadian War Museum

Mark Osborne Humphries
University of Western Ontario

Recommended Citation

Humphries, Mark Osborne (2008) "Sir Arthur Currie and the Legacy of the Great War: Letters from the Archives of the Canadian War Museum," *Canadian Military History*: Vol. 17 : Iss. 2 , Article 5.
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/cmh/vol17/iss2/5>

This Canadian War Museum is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Canadian Military History by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

Sir Arthur Currie and the Legacy of the Great War Letters from the Archives of the Canadian War Museum

Introduced and edited by Mark Osborne Humphries

Sir Arthur William Currie was one of the most successful corps commanders on the Western Front. A farm boy from southwestern Ontario who went west to seek his fortune during the Laurier boom, he was in many ways a typical Anglo-Canadian. Currie had served in the militia before the war – commanding an artillery regiment in British Columbia – but was not a professional soldier. Nevertheless on the battlefields of France and Belgium he proved an able tactician and leader of men. He was not the most charismatic of men but his soldiers respected him and they got the tough jobs done. While Currie's skills proved an asset to the British Expeditionary Force, they also served political purposes back home.¹

Sir Robert Borden, the Canadian prime minister, was an imperial-nationalist. He saw in Currie and the Canadian Corps much political potential. For years, many elites in the British Empire had been calling for closer co-operation between the dominions and the British Government in economics, foreign policy, and defence. Some even called for Imperial federation. Borden had long supported an increased Canadian commitment to the British Empire and in the successes of the Canadian Corps he saw an opportunity to advance that goal. As the Canadian Corps became the spearhead of the British armies in the autumn of 1918, flanked on many occasions by its sister dominions, many believed that Canada would logically transfer its important



battlefield role to peacetime, taking a hand in forming Imperial foreign, defence, and economic policy. In this analysis, the Canadian Corps would lead Canada from adolescence as a nation to an adult partnership within the Empire. To paraphrase Stephen Leacock, the son would come home to help run the farm.²

In Currie, Borden found an unlikely though enthusiastic supporter. Idealistic, naive, and proud, Currie often made remarks to the press, wrote letters to prominent Canadians, and made long winded speeches which highlighted the triumphs of the Canadian Corps, often at the expense of other British units. Deeply introspective, Currie believed that the sacrifices of the battlefield had meaning. For him the men who had died under his command had perished not only for the betterment of Canada, but also for the greater good of the Empire. As Jonathan Vance suggests in *Death So Noble*, Canadians had sacrificed themselves so that others could live better lives.³

Like Borden, Currie believed that Canada was destined to take a more prominent position in the British Empire. At home the war would bring the birth of a new and more just society. The crusading spirit of the war years would be transmitted home to Canada with returning soldiers who would attack social, political, and economic enemies with as much vigour and enthusiasm as they had the German army. As Currie aged – after retiring from the military in



Library and Archives Canada PA 4254

1920 he was appointed principal of McGill University – he became disillusioned. A new society did not rise up out of the ashes of the First World War and Canada withdrew from Empire. For Currie, it was not the ideals or the goals that had been faulty but the politicians who had failed to live up to the sacrifice of the Canadian soldiers. By the end of his life, Currie was pessimistic, no longer the optimistic corps commander.

Currie's transformation is symbolic of a greater change within Canadian society. The ideas which made the sacrifices of the war years possible and gave meaning to thousands of deaths failed to bear up in the face of the large needs of many returned soldiers, the Great Depression, and rearmament in Europe. Currie's transformation occurred perhaps more quickly than Canadian society, but his ideas are familiar. While the majority of Currie's papers are held at Library and Archives Canada and at McGill University, an important and often overlooked collection is housed at the Canadian War Museum (CWM).⁴ The letters housed at CWM provide a fascinating glimpse into the mind of the corps commander and the troubled world in which he lived. What follows are two speeches by Sir Arthur Currie: one made in 1919 just after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and the other on Armistice Day in 1933, just before his death. The first speech is unpublished and the second is extracted from my recently published book *The Selected Papers of Sir Arthur Currie: Diaries, Letters, and Report to the Ministry, 1917-1933*.⁵ Both are taken from the Arthur William Currie Papers housed at the CWM.

Notes

1. On Sir Arthur Currie, see Daniel Dancocks, *Sir Arthur Currie: A Biography* (Toronto: Methuen, 1985); A.M.J. Hyatt, *General Sir Arthur Currie: A Military Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987); Hugh M. Urquhart, *Arthur Currie: The Biography of a Great Canadian* (Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1950).
2. Robert Craig Brown, *Robert Laird Borden: A Biography, Vol. II* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1980); Robert Laird Borden, *Robert Laird Borden: His Memoirs* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1938); Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Idea of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).
3. Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).
4. See also, Barbara M. Wilson, "The Road to the Cobourg Court Room: New Material from the Archives of the Canadian War Museum on the Sir Arthur Currie-Sir Sam Hughes Dispute, 1918-19," *Canadian Military History* 10, 3 (2001): 67-73.
5. Mark Osborne Humphries, ed., *The Selected Papers of Sir Arthur Currie: Diaries, Letters, and Report to the Ministry, 1917-1933* (Waterloo: LCMSDS Press of Wilfrid Laurier University, 2008).
6. File 19801226-286, 58A 1 62.1, Arthur Currie Papers [ACP], Canadian War Museum [CWM].
7. File 19801226-287, 58A 1 62.2, ACP CWM.

General Sir Arthur Currie, December 1918.

On Dominion Day 1919, Currie attended a reception hosted by Sir George Perley, the former minister of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada and Canada's high commissioner to Great Britain, at which Leopold Amery, the undersecretary of state for the colonies, proposed a toast to Canada. In responding, Currie took the opportunity to reflect both on the lessons of the war which had brought victory, and the future of Great Britain, Canada, and the Empire.

Currie's Speech at the Connaught Rooms, London, 1 July 1919⁶

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

I am proud to be privileged to support the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies who has so eloquently proposed the toast of "Canada." We have heard and read so much in recent years about the politician undoing the work of the soldier, and about the soldier failing to see the value of much of what the politician does, that some there may be who regard the classes we represent as always and utterly opposed to each other. Disproving this belief, and in harmony with the new order of things which ruleth the world since last Saturday, namely, the spirit of tolerance and co-operation, the Under-Secretary and myself stand together in fullest accord in asking you to honour this toast. The caustic tongue will intimate that it took a toast to Canada to bring us together. Not so. But I am willing to affirm, remembering the history of the past five years, remembering the day we celebrate, and casting one's mind into the future and trying to depict what the years hold in store for us, I am willing to affirm that a toast to Canada is one which all true Britishers, whatever their calling, their profession, their race, or their creed may be, will delight to honour.

A fair proportion of the gentlemen present tonight are in uniform. Had this gathering taken place a few months ago, the proportion would be much greater. What does this signify? It means that the soldiers of Canada have returned to Canada; have gone home. But not before they wrote the name of Canada in bold, outstanding letters on the World's Roll of Honour. Not before

they had secured for Canada the right to speak as a Nation, admired and respected in the Concert of Nations. These men, who for years fought, suffered, and daily tendered their lives on the battlefields of Europe, for Canada's sake, with the "Canada" badge on their shoulders, and "Canada" engraved in their hearts as their constant inspiration, can and will maintain their Canadian ideal by becoming useful Canadian citizens. Their military life has been to them a complementary education. Their assumption of citizenship has become enlarged, so as to include duties as well as privileges, and of these duties they have performed the most onerous – they have shed their blood in defence of the State. The dangers, sufferings, and losses shared in occasion have broken down the barrier between classes, have swept old and baneful prejudices, have broadened the outlook on life, and have created an atmosphere of tolerance, mutual respect, understanding, and sympathy. The citizen soldiers have learned the value of individual initiative backed by sound judgement, and they have also learned that organisation and discipline, by measuring the task to the strength and capacity of the individual, by preventing waste and measuring mutual support, yields much greater results than scattered efforts. The duly subordinated and co-operating powers which made them irresistible as soldiers in battle are the very elements essential to good and progressive citizenship in a free country. It is now up to Canada – I was about to say the politicians of Canada – to turn to good account in the struggle for prosperity for the Nation the qualities acquired and developed by her name in the field of battle.

What are those qualities, and how can they be used? When I assumed command of the Canadian Corps I often preached from a text something like this: "Provided we do not forget the lessons of the war; provided we pay due regard to our intelligence; provided we make proper preparation; there is no position on the Western Front which cannot be successfully assaulted by well-trained, well-disciplined, and well-led troops, attacking on a sound plan. The best thinkers and writers of the day constantly impress upon us that although Germany is today officially a friendly nation, there lies before us other battles which will tax all our powers

of endurance, all our patience, all our sound judgement, self-sacrifice, and determination to win. He who runs may read that the Treaty of Versailles has not brought Peace. There are some, doubtless, who believe because they no longer hear the bombs, that all the struggle is over. Such people are like the foolish virgins whose maps were not trimmed and burning. They cannot see what is going on around them. Shall we win this approaching struggle? I have just as much confidence that we shall as I always had that, in the end, we should certainly best the Boche. Yet victory will come sooner and will come easier if we remember a few of the lessons brought but by our experiences in the past.

First, to win you must attack. If there are difficulties to be overcome, they must be encountered. If there are dangers to be met, their presence must be recognised. You must assault the citadel of the enemy if you hope to vanquish the foe. A policy of drift must not be tolerated, because in the meantime the enemy is strengthening his position. A policy of wait and see must not be approved, because it ends in confusion, worse confounded. A policy of dilly and dally must not be amused, because it only adds to the fierceness of the final struggle. If theirs is an Irish question, attack it. You may have a Somme, but in the end you will celebrate a Vimy. I cannot believe – and there are tens of thousands like me in the British Empire who cannot but believe – but that this question could have been more easily settled if it had been attacked when it first appeared on the political horizon, and if it had not been for years made a football of political parties. There can be, there must be, come fair solution of the problem. If there is a tariff question, attack it. The West may prefer their claims in bold and loud language. The East may respond with equally emphatic words, but there must be a fair and equitable solution. Don't cloud the issue by magnifying out of all proportion to its importance some other question, as I have known some officers to gloss over a successful German raid by pointing out how well their troops have behaved in some imaginary patrol encounter. In my text, I said "provided we paid due regard to our intelligence." In the army, we had observers who watched the enemy during every hour of daylight. Our patrols watched him during the night, often penetrating his lines in

order to ensure additional information. Our listening sets picked up his conversation. Our aeroplanes patrolled his back areas, and took photographs of his defences. Our secret agents reported his activities, and in countless ways we studied the enemy. But here is the point. Then we got the information, we acted upon it. We took action immediately. If we found that he was putting up additional wire, we turned on a machine gun and shot him up. If he was making new defences, we shot him up. When we located definitely his machine gun emplacements and trench mortars, we shot them up. If we learned that he used certain routes in travelling to his front lines, we shot those roads. If his batteries were abnormally active, we shot them up. If his aeroplanes were unduly inquisitive, ours became more active and aggressive. If we judged that he was contemplating a raid or an attack, we raided or attacked first. Let us do the same thing in our everyday life. If Bolshevism shows signs of rearing its ugly head, in our midst, let us shoot it up. Let us attack it always and everywhere it is met with, for its intentions are hostile. To know an injurious agency is at work, and to do nothing to check its influence is wrong. If venereal disease is rampant, in our land, do not let us hold up our hands in holy horror, or speak about it in suppressed whispers. Let us shoot it up. Let us grapple with the problem. Let us get the prostitutes off the streets and under control. If illegitimacy is on the increase, let us shoot it up. We can at least police our parks better, and do something to stop the shameful cuddling that offends the eye almost everywhere you go. I cannot see two people of opposite sex sitting in a park, out for a walk, or having a bicycle ride along a road, by what they are hugging each other. If divorcees and bigamists are becoming more numerous, let us make the punishment more severe; and let us prevent our theatres presenting plays in which the heroes or heroines are those who have violated, or are about to violate the marriage laws.

If our intelligence has told us that half the men eligible for service in the recent war were physically unfit, let us examine closely into what was the cause of this serious reflection on the physical condition of our race. If it was due to insufficient housing, to the sweat-shop, to the fact that the workers were paid as little that they could not purchase sufficient food for the family, if it

was due to the ravages of tuberculosis, intemperance, or syphilis, let us attack the problem. It is a national problem and cannot be left to the efforts of generous enthusiasts.

In my text, I spoke of training, or discipline, and of leadership. Training is education. Discipline is self-control, and of each, one could say much. But I must content myself with saying a word about leadership. Our leaders in the fight we are now entering are the Government. They have a right to expect from us loyalty and a sense of duty, while we have a right to demand from them courage and imagination. Courage to fight only for what is right. Courage to deal with problems, not in a manner considered politically expedient, but in a manner which their education, their experience and their conscience tells them is right. Courage to say "No" to every harmful influence which would make them swerve from their path of duty, violate their vows or betray their trust. Courage which would enable them to willingly sacrifice their political life in defence of what they know to be for the country's good. And we expect our leaders to have imagination. They must be able to not only to appreciate coming events, but to act. They must not wait for a strike to occur before seeing that all is not well between the employer and the employed. It is all right to appoint commissions, but let them be appointed in time, and let their reports be acted upon.

In my text, I said "provided we do not forget the lessons of the war." Let me make a brief reference to one of the outstanding lessons before I sit down. That lesson is the folly of unpreparedness. In a paper published yesterday, I read that the war had cost us eight million tons of shipping; eight thousand million pounds; and in killed, wounded, and missing, over one million lives. It has cost us a great deal more than the sum mentioned when we consider the losses occasion by the dislocation and interruption of our economic and industrial life, while our permanent casualties are far higher than the



number mentioned when we consider the producing ability of those who are left. No one would for a moment contend that our losses would have been anything like as great if the warnings had been heeded, and if we had been able to mobilise on August 4th, 1914, all our resources, human and industrial. Let us take the awful lesson to heart. Canada and the other Dominions must be prepared to bear their full share of the Empire's responsibilities. There is no use in shouting from the house-tops our demand for political and national equality unless we are prepared to assume the consequent obligation, for there is no right without a parallel, and no privilege without an attendant responsibility. That we do willingly assume those obligations, it goes without saying that we must have some say in the Empire's foreign policy, but that is another question, and one too large to be discussed tonight.

* * * * *

On Thursday, 30 November 1933, the former Corps Commander died at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal of pneumonia. Currie was 57. Despite his illness, Currie wrote an Armistice Address for the annual Veteran's Dinner in Toronto. It was read aloud on the night of 11 November 1933 in his absence.

Sir Arthur Currie's Veteran's Dinner Address, 11 November 1933⁷

I deeply appreciate, as always, the privilege of meeting again tonight so many members of the Old Corps and of saying a few words to so many of my comrades of other days. The circumstances of our lives and places keep us for the most part far away from each other, but tonight, and always on Armistice night, whether we are gathered in assembly as we are here, or listening by radio to Armistice programmes, perhaps far distant, or alone and un-companioned, we who were once members of the Canadian Corps are bound by the ties of a common remembrance. I know that to all who lived through the war years, and more particularly to those who saw active service, today has been a day of sacred memories, different perhaps in detail to each one of us, but yet all based on similar experiences and similar emotions.

With the lapse of years, Armistice Day becomes naturally less demonstrative. The ranks of those who saw service grow yearly smaller, as we pay our toll to time. And in the future the day will grow less weighted with meaning to the generation born in the years between. As our country looks back to it from a widening distance of years, its memories will perhaps remain vivid only in the minds of the veterans, to whom its importance was then so colossal. But whatever changes may come, and however slight may be the recognition of future generations, I hope that Armistice Day may never cease to be impressive. I hope that the two-minute interval of solemn silence will always be more than a formal, statutory gesture, that it will always mean a reverent pause, in which we gladly remember, with tender and grateful thoughts, those who nobly died for our country's ideals. I hope that the graves of the Unknown Soldiers, and our National Chambers of Remembrance, will have their eternal tributes on this day, and that our

country, in the years to come, and the generations that knew not war, will not forget.

Tonight, we who came home, move back in memory fifteen years to the hour when our army halted where it stood, when the firing died suddenly away on the Western Front, when the few last straggling shots echoed down the mightiest battle-line the world had ever seen, and were swallowed up in utter silence. Tonight, we cannot recall the frantic cheering and the frenzied rejoicings of the folks at home, as they gave expression to their sense of relief when they realized that the long nightmare of the years was ended. We recall rather the silence of exhausted effort and of daring hope; we recall that still moment when after four years of a strange life, in which death was ever present, the fighting men were suddenly conscious of the fact that the strain was over and that they had now to adjust themselves to the new world of promised peace and justice and content, which they had been led to believe they were, after all, about to enter. But, like all other silences, there was a puzzled question in it by those fighting men. Was all the agony they had gone through for four years really to achieve its end? Were the hopes which had sustained them, and had sustained their folks back home, through their unparalleled sacrifices, actually to be realized at last? There was a pause without an answer. It was the most impressive and portentous pause in history.

Today the pause – the silence – was reverently repeated. But after fifteen years of the promised new world we were told we fought to create, the puzzled question it tacitly conveyed is still unanswered. The lurid lights of the battle front we knew have been long extinguished by our hands, the mutter of the guns and the crackle of the musketry have long receded down the years. Yet the war and its aftermath are still with us, more terrible even than fifteen years ago. Its effects have not been fully mastered, its issues have not been settled – that is the simple truth, the confession which today brings its shame. Our soldiers, living and dead, performed their part with unquestioned heroism and devotion in those battle days. But in the years since then, the fifteen misnamed years of peace, the peoples of the world have not so well performed their tasks of understanding the vast forces that were then released, of controlling them and of making

good the victory. It is not, therefore, surprising that the men who fought are sometimes, with reluctance, but with the compulsion of obvious circumstances, of the opinion that their sacrifice and that of their comrades who fell was all in vain.

cabled dispatches this week that the international situation in Europe today is practically what it was in 1913 on the eve of the late war. And the rest of the world, like Europe, is haunted by the fear of war, a stalking fear, which for the past nine or ten months has dominated the press and



“Old Boys” gathered in Toronto in 1934 for a Canadian Corps reunion.

We remember tonight, and it is well that our country should remember, the high resolves of that time fifteen years ago. There was unspeakable sorrow for the great army of youth that had gone so early to its death. We were told that the world would henceforth be safe for youth. But what of youth today, and the opportunity for youth in our modern world? Where, ask the men who fought, is that new world of justice and good will they suffered so keenly to create? Has the world, has our country, in the fifteen years since the Armistice, kept its promised faith with the unreturning dead? Has the great sacrifice really turned to glory, the glory of a better time? Has the world done anything more in these fifteen years than give lip-service to the ideals for which our fallen comrades gave their lives? The answer to these questions is found in the actual conditions of the hour. And these conditions are such that Armistice Day should smite the conscience of the world.

I need not dwell tonight on these conditions, with all their horrible and terrifying possibilities. They are known, and some of them deeply felt, by everyone in this room and by everyone listening elsewhere to my voice. We are told in

private conversation. There is no sense of security in the minds of European countries today. We are told that all that happened before 1914 is now being repeated; that behind the scenes secret agreements for a new balance of power are being made; that war propaganda is at work again, with the old subtle appeals to what is called national honour, national prestige, or national patriotism; that sooner or later another war will wreck our civilization, and we will stand helpless amid the ruins. The outlook for humanity is not hopeful, if we take seriously to heart these persistent and disturbing aspects of the world's condition today. And all this is but fifteen years after the signing of an armistice we thought was to end war – when we said “never again,” when the whole world said “never again,” as a pledge made by the living to the dead. That pledge is now but a faint echo, for old hates are reviving, old fears have come back, and on this fifteenth anniversary of a peace which was to silence battle fronts forever, peace is not a fact, but still a dream.

Apart from the threat of war, with its growing cloud, other conditions in our world are equally disturbing. Bitterness and hate, selfishness and greed, are still entrenched in our social and

economic and political life. National finances are disorganized throughout the world, taxes are overwhelming, agriculture and business are everywhere prostrated, and unemployment is more widespread than at any time in history. Our world is a world of suffering, of uncertainty, of demon doubts and fears. Our world is not yet done with the necessity for heroism and sacrifice. Returned men are called upon today as never before to aid every movement to establish a just and lasting peace throughout the world, to lighten the burden of armaments, to usher in a new era of good-will and fraternity among the peoples of the earth, to help solve the new and changing problems of these later years, to rehabilitate the social and economic life of our country, and to compose the hates and prejudices and deep animosities which smoulder and threaten in our land and in other lands. We need, as never before, the healing qualities of devotion and fidelity and self-sacrifice and goodwill and comradeship and friendliness, so that suspicion may be vanquished and justice and mutual trust may be permanently enthroned. All this desire is in harmony with the real spirit of Armistice Day – the day dedicated to sacrifice and loyal remembrance of others.

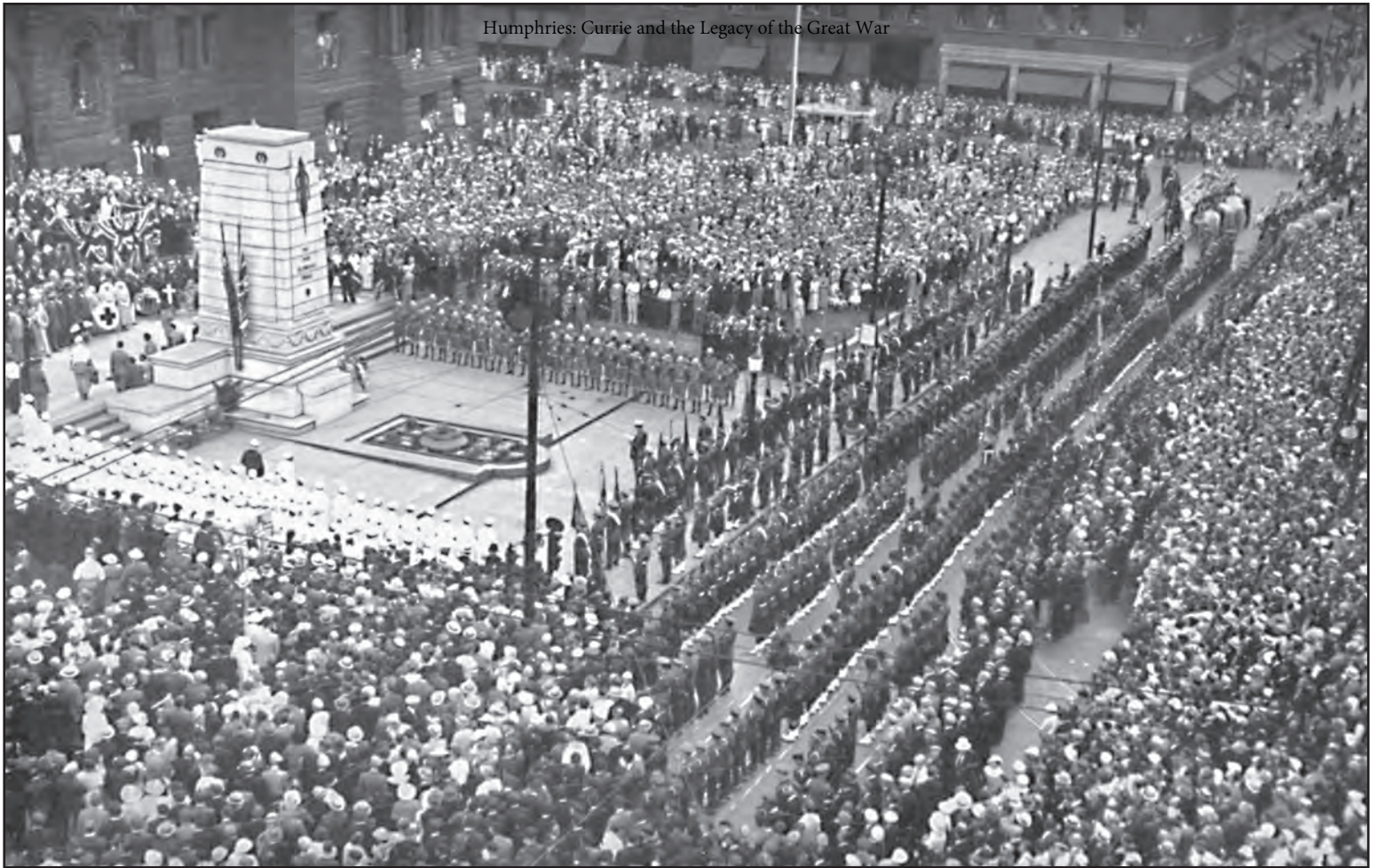
It is sometimes suggested – and not, I think, frankly, without some justification – that in the fifteen years of reconstruction or re-destruction that have gone since the Armistice was signed, returned men everywhere have not themselves done all they should have done or could have done to establish that better time to which they looked forward when the war ended; that they have not applied to conditions around them the qualities and the principles of life that carried them through to victory along the battle-line. It may be that we have not been sufficiently aggressive, that having done our bit in other fields, we have too far withdrawn in silence or inaction from subsequent events, and have not imposed or inculcated our ideals and the results of our experiences upon our peacetime guides and leaders. This criticism of veterans of the war is heard today in every country that had a part in the conflict. If it has truth, behind the truth are, in my judgment, some potent reasons.

Men returned from the front in a spirit of weariness, but in a spirit of hope, looking forward with confidence, after years of trench life to the peace they had been promised. They

soon found that their new world was still a world of struggle, a world of bargain and of battle. They found that they had escaped from one ugly world and one disaster, only to plunge into another. They had to struggle and fight for what they felt and knew was a simple right – some slight form of rehabilitation, and, what was more discouraging, for adequate help for their wounded and incapacitated comrades, and for adequate protection for the dependents of their comrades who had given their lives for their country. I can say without evasion or hesitation that the great mass of returned men in Canada never had the thought that because they fought for their country they were entitled to preferred treatment by their country, in comparison with other citizens. They never, as a rule, contended that because they wore the uniform of our Corps they had therefore a right-of-way to exceptional benefits. There were perhaps some exceptions, as there are always exceptions in every way of life, but these exceptions are infinitesimal compared with the mass of our men. But on one right all are united – the right of the wounded and the broken, the right of the dependents of the dead for adequate provision and care.

I am not going to recall the struggles of these fifteen years. There were disappointments. There was even bitterness. There was cynicism. The result is not surprising – that many returned men withdrew from the struggle, in despair, with the feeling that their participation in the making of the new world was not desired. There were disappointments because of administration of soldiers' affairs, disappointments because of inadequate machinery, and indifference. The struggle still goes on. We read in the press of every Province today of the disappointment of different branches of the Legion because of the most recent changes in Pensions Administration and the readjustments of methods. But the voice of the veterans, even on their own affairs, is unheard, or at least unattended.

One of our defects or weaknesses in the past has been, doubtless, a lack of unity. We have not had the same cohesion, the same unanimity that was ours in the old Corps. Naturally, geographical conditions keep us apart as groups of men; but geographical distances may be conquered by a spirit, the spirit of service that should bind us into one great and useful force...



Armistice Day celebrations in Toronto, 11 November 1934.

I am not a pessimist when I think of the future. And I am sure that the returned men who are listening to me tonight are not pessimists, however cynical some of them may be with respect to certain phases of our national life. We have seen dark nights together. And we have also seen the dawn of new and specious days. I know that as in the battle hours we will again take the morning into our hearts. In our deliberate and final thought, as returned men, we have faith that these moments of discouragement are fleeting, and perhaps misleading; that those whose memories we especially cherish did not make their sacrifices in vain, and that in the end the stern determination of millions of men and women, who are minted with no spirit of unworthy pacifism, will prevail over those whose views would tend to perpetuate the horrors of war, even though some of these latter may be seated in the high places of national executive and legislative power.

Armistice Day is primarily a commemoration of the dead. But a commemoration of the dead should be likewise an appeal to the living not

to deplore the past, but to awaken our sense of responsibility to make our world less deplorable. The disappointment – even the bitterness – of many who came back may be traced to the monstrous paradox that only because of the nobility of individual sacrifice does war in any way ennoble civilization. We saw at first hand the sacrifice of much that was best in our country. But the weariness and the disillusionment from which we could not escape are no longer fitting to a new generation charged with the tasks of peace. We know from experience the stupidity of war, and the stupidity of those who made or caused wars. Does our responsibility end with condemning the follies of the stupid or the vicious twenty years ago? What can we do as veterans to make the world less deplorable? Are we bestirring ourselves in this night of hysteria which may end in war? Ours is a man-made world, and in it are we doing all we can do to prevent a catastrophe which we will later deplore? Are we fighting to the last, as we fought fifteen years ago, for the vitality and the continuity of civilized standards in public and private affairs, in national and international life? Are we fighting so that the next generation

THE CANADIAN
AIR FORCE JOURNAL

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS
for the Summer 2008 Issue of
THE CANADIAN AIR FORCE JOURNAL
Deadline: 30 April 2008

The *Canadian Air Force Journal* is a forum for discussing concepts, issues and ideas that are both crucial and central to aerospace power. The journal is dedicated to disseminating the ideas and opinions of not only Air Force personnel, but also those civilians with an interest in aerospace power issues.

Articles may cover the scope of Air Force doctrine, training, leadership, lessons learned, and Air Force operations; past, present or future.

Submissions on related subjects such as ethics, technology, and Air Force history are also invited.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION REGARDING SUBMISSION CRITERIA, PLEASE VISIT:
www.airforceforces.gc.ca/CFAWC/eLibrary/Journal/submission_requirements_e.asp
or
http://trenton.mil.ca/Lodger/CFAWC/eLibrary/Journal/5ubmission_Requirements_e.asp

PRODUCED BY THE
CANADIAN FORCES
AEROSPACE WARFARE CENTRE

Canada National Defence Défense nationale

interested only in greed, to take the reins from our hands and drive us into another abyss.

The truest commemoration of our honoured dead will be in the vigorous enlistment of our own lives and capacities in the struggle between unselfishness and greed, honesty and corruption, justice and injustice, and in the serious application to our national problems of those qualities which distinguished our Corps in the war days, and enabled us always to advance and conquer.

Armistice Day reminds our country of the steadfastness of our fighting troops. It should also be a reminder to every citizen that he still has a duty to discharge, if the war is to be fully won and its high objectives permanently secured. It should call us to a realization that we still have to complete the unfinished task of our dead comrades who speak to us tonight with a voiceless eloquence – the task of replacing the present system of suspicion and fear and conflict with the enduring fabric of confidence in humane law and order.

And so, in conclusion, we drop the rose of remembrance on the supreme devotion of our sacred dead. We linger, like our country, in our tribute of reverent memory of our glorious youth who gave their lives to defend our liberty: “Sleep well, heroic souls, in silence sleep, Lapped in the circling arms of kindly death! No ill can vex your slumbers, no foul breath of slander, hate, derision, mar the deep Repose that holds you close.”

And on this Armistice night, as we recall the nobility of your sacrifice, we turn away from trenches and wounds and death and we rededicate our lives with hope to the still unfinished work which you so gallantly advanced and for which you died.

Mark Humphries is a PhD Candidate at the University of Western Ontario where he holds as SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship and is studying under the direction of Dr. Jonathan Vance.

of youth will not condemn our stupidity as we condemned in the trenches the stupidity of our elders in 1914 and the era immediately before it? On those nights and days of suffering and death, when we saw our comrades fall in the fire of savages fed by the so-called gods of civilization, we endured and “carried on,” in the firm hope that out of the embers and the broken human dust would rise a new order, in which war and greed and injustice would have no place. That hope will yet be realized, despite discouragements, even in a world which has to make its way out of sickness and despair, if we but keep our shield and our faith, and if we insist on leadership in all affairs that is not leadership for apathy. If another war comes, the responsibility will not be upon the militarists, but on ourselves, because of our inertia. We are to blame if we allow others,