

# *The Migration of British Ex-Servicemen to Canada and the Role of the Naval and Military Emigration League, 1899-1914*

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*Efforts to settle British ex-servicemen in Canada prior to 1914 formed a significant precedent for the large-scale, state-supported empire soldier settlement schemes after World War I. Initially designed to bolster colonial defence and sustain the British connection, these schemes possessed an important social dimension; land was a useful method of rewarding ex-servicemen for years of devoted and faithful service. Public concern for the welfare of Britain's soldiery continued to grow throughout the nineteenth century, fuelled in part by the military shortcomings exposed during the Crimean War of 1854-1856 and the second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. As the government grappled with the problems of military efficiency and administration, subsequent investigations revealed the immense problems many servicemen faced when they returned to civilian life. As military reform and imperial defence became increasingly important political issues, the plight of the British ex-servicemen and army pensioners attracted the attention of a growing number of philanthropists and social reformers. Indeed, many of the debates which emerged on post-World War I soldier settlement, migration and post-service employment had been clearly rehearsed. Nowhere is this more undoubtedly demonstrated than in the attempts by the Naval and Military Emigration League (NMEL) to involve the British and Canadian governments in the migration to Canada of British ex-servicemen prior to 1914.*

*Les efforts consacrés avant 1914 à l'établissement au Canada de soldats britanniques démobilisés préfiguraient éloquemment les vastes programmes en ce sens que les autorités gouvernementales ont pilotés après la Première Guerre mondiale. Destinés, à l'origine, au renforcement de la défense des colonies et des liens avec la Grande-Bretagne, ces programmes avaient en outre une importante dimension sociale, car l'attribution d'un fonds de terre constituait une heureuse façon de récompenser les militaires à la retraite pour leur dévouement au service de la patrie. Tout au long du dix-neuvième siècle, l'opinion publique s'est progressivement sensibilisée au bien-être des soldats britanniques, notamment à la suite des révélations qui ont été faites au sujet des carences des forces armées durant la guerre de Crimée (1854-1858) et celle des Boers (1899-1902). Alors même que le gouvernement s'employait à rendre l'armée plus efficace et à résoudre ses difficultés administratives, d'autres enquêtes mettaient au jour les énormes problèmes auxquels faisaient face les militaires lorsqu'ils réintégraient la vie*

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civile. Au moment donc où la réorganisation de l'armée et la défense de l'empire nourrissaient le débat politique, des philanthropes et des réformateurs sociaux de plus en plus nombreux s'intéressèrent au sort des soldats démobilisés ainsi qu'à celui des militaires à la retraite. Manifestement, bon nombre des débats qui, après la guerre de 14, ont porté sur l'établissement, l'émigration et l'emploi des anciens combattants avaient de solides antécédents. À preuve, les démarches de la Naval Military Emigration League (NMEL) auprès des autorités britanniques et canadiennes en faveur de l'émigration au Canada des soldats britanniques démobilisés ou retraités, et cela, avant 1914.

Between 1909 and 1914, the Naval and Military Emigration League (NMEL) tried to involve the British and Canadian governments in the migration to Canada of British ex-servicemen. Their focus on soldier migration was symptomatic of a growing public awareness in Edwardian society of the plight of the ex-soldier: an issue which had received little official attention prior to the second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). Traditionally, the British government had steadfastly refused to contemplate state aid for large-scale migration programmes of any sort. Officials at Whitehall, true to the doctrines of laissez-faire liberalism, were determined to uphold the maxim uttered in 1885 by the imperial publicist and historian J.R. Seeley: "[e]migration is in itself only a private affair, it does not, as such, concern Governments".<sup>1</sup> Only after the Armistice of November 1918 did British authorities find it necessary to become directly involved in sponsoring imperial migration, and in particular schemes for ex-servicemen, as a means of solving the problems of demobilization and post-war unemployment. Nevertheless, many of the debates which emerged on post-World War I soldier settlement and migration had clearly been rehearsed by the NMEL. The attempts of this unique philanthropic society to settle British ex-servicemen in Canada prior to 1914 can be seen as a significant precedent for the large-scale, state-supported programmes of the post-war era.<sup>2</sup>

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1. J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (London: Macmillan, 1885), p. 102.

2. Desmond Morton and Glenn Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life, 1915-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987); Marilyn Lake, *The Limits of Hope: Soldier Settlement in Victoria, 1915-1938* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1987); Kent Fedorowich, "'Foredoomed to Failure': The Resettlement of British Ex-Servicemen in the Dominions", 1914-1930 (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1990). Ex-servicemen were encouraged to settle in South Africa by the British government after the second Anglo-Boer War as part of its anglicization and reconstruction policies. For the political ramifications of these programmes and the role of ex-soldier migration and settlement, see Donald Denoon, *A Grand Illusion: The Failure of Imperial Policy in the Transvaal Colony during the Period of Reconstruction, 1900-1905* (London: Longman, 1973); M. Streak, *Lord Milner's Immigration Policy for the Transvaal, 1897-1905* (Johannesburg: Rand Afrikaans University, 1970); Kent Fedorowich, "Anglicization and the Politicization of British Immigration to South Africa, 1899-1929", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XIX, no. 2 (1991), pp. 222-246.

## I

In spite of official reticence, British governments had long sponsored small-scale civilian and ex-service migration. In the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, several limited ventures were underwritten as an experiment to relieve post-war civilian economic distress. Despite the lacklustre results of these schemes, they continued to exercise a powerful hold over a small group of influential philanthropists and government officials.<sup>3</sup> In addition, several military emigration and colonization schemes were implemented by the British government between 1812 and 1860 in the colonies of white settlement. With the exception of the enrolled pensioner settlements established in 1846 by Earl Grey, the Colonial Secretary in Lord John Russell's Whig administration, these were all abject failures.<sup>4</sup> Deemed a wasteful and fruitless exercise, attempts at military colonization were apparently abandoned by the British government in 1867.

Nevertheless, some politicians and senior service officers continued to raise the issue of military colonization in the late Victorian era in the context of armed forces reform. The Crimean War (1854-1856) had demonstrated gross inadequacies in the recruitment, training and organization of the British Army. To rectify these problems, a number of measures were initiated, the most sweeping being those introduced in 1870 by Edward Cardwell, the Secretary of State for War. One of his most significant initiatives was the introduction of a new system of short service "with the colours". Although the initial term of service in the regular army remained fixed at twelve years, the *Army Enlistment Act* of 1870 provided that soldiers could serve the first six years with the colours and then transfer to the reserves for the remainder. Recruitment was central to these changes. The introduction of short service enlistment would not only allow for the creation of a large and effective reserve, but the reformers anticipated that the new system would attract a better quality of recruit. However, there were problems. A shorter enlistment period increased the annual demand for recruits. Likewise, it meant that more men were being discharged every year, which some critics argued "allowed

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3. H.J.M. Johnston, *British Emigration Policy, 1815-1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); R.C. Mills, *The Colonisation of Australia, 1829-1842* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1915).

4. For an examination of these military settlements, see W.A.B. Douglas, "The Blessing of the Land: Naval Officers in Upper Canada, 1815-1841", in Adrian Preston and Peter Dennis, eds., *Swords and Covenants* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), pp. 42-73; R. England, "Discharged and Disbanded Soldiers in Canada Prior to 1914", *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. XXVII (1946), pp. 1-18; J.K. Johnson, "The Chelsea Pensioners in Upper Canada", *Ontario History*, Vol. LIII, no. 4 (1961), pp. 273-289; J.S. Martell, "Military Settlements in Nova Scotia After the War of 1812", *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society*, Vol. XXIV (1938), pp. 75-105; G.F. Playter, "An Account of Three Military Settlements in Eastern Ontario — Perth, Lanark and Richmond, 1815-1820", *Ontario Historical Society, Papers and Records*, Vol. XX (1923), pp. 98-104; George Raudzens, "A Successful Military Settlement: Earl Grey's Enrolled Pensioners of 1846 in Canada", *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. LII, no. 4 (1971), pp. 389-403.

experienced men to leave the army sooner". This had the additional effect of increasing the number of ex-soldiers in the civilian labour market.<sup>5</sup>

As the government grappled with the problems of military efficiency, enlistment and administration, it was apparent that pensions, post-service employment and the successful reintroduction of the soldier into civilian life were becoming increasingly important issues. Government investigations conducted in 1876-1877 and 1894-1895 left no doubt as to the difficulties encountered by many ex-servicemen.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, apart from providing a small and inadequate pension, and reserving a few clerical positions in certain government departments, the state avoided further responsibility by hiding behind the mantle of laissez-faire liberalism. Officials argued that a number of private charities and agencies already existed, such as the National Association for the Employment of Reserve and Discharged Soldiers (established in 1885), which provided welcome assistance to unemployed or destitute ex-servicemen and their families.<sup>7</sup> This attitude was reinforced by the findings of a select committee which delved into employment opportunities for retired soldiers and sailors in 1895. In addition, the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Secretary of State for War, emphasized the isolation many veterans experienced upon returning to civilian life and observed that society tended to regard all ex-servicemen as a "peculiar class of men segregated from the rest of the community".<sup>8</sup>

The increasing interest in the welfare of the ex-soldier, army pensioner and reservist evident in Britain between 1900 and 1914 stemmed from the experience of the second Anglo-Boer War. The military catastrophes suffered

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5. Brian Bond, "Recruiting the Victorian Army, 1870-92", *Victorian Studies*, Vol. V, no. 4 (1962), pp. 331-338; *idem*, "The Effect of the Cardwell Reforms in Army Organisation, 1874-1904", *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, Vol. CV (1960), pp. 515-524; A.V. Tucker, "Army and Society in England, 1870-1900: A Reassessment of the Cardwell Reforms", *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. II, no. 2 (1963), pp. 100-141; A.R. Skelley, *The Victorian Army at Home* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 251-254, p. 212.

6. *British Parliamentary Papers* (hereafter *BPP*), Report of the Select Committee on the Employment of Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines in Civil Departments of the Public Service (c. 356), 1876; Report of the Select Committee on the Employment of Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines in Civil Departments of the Public Service (c. 383), 1877; Report of the Select Committee on Retired Soldiers' and Sailors' Employment (c. 258), 1894; Report of the Select Committee on Retired Soldiers' and Sailors' Employment (c. 338), 1895.

7. Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977); Edward M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (London: Longman, 1980); Peter Burroughs, "Promoting Thrift, Sobriety and Discipline in the British Army: The Establishment of Military Savings Banks", *Histoire sociale — Social History*, Vol. XIV, no. 28 (1981), pp. 323-337. For a description of the British Army's pension system, its administration and shortcomings in the nineteenth century, see Skelley, *Victorian Army*, pp. 204-218.

8. Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), War Office Papers (hereafter WO), WO 33/70, Civil Employment of Discharged Soldiers and Army Reserve Men (1897); extract from a circular letter drawn up by the Secretary of State for War to various government departments, June 27, 1896.

by British arms in the opening stages of the conflict jolted an overconfident and complacent people. It provided an impetus for critical national self-examination and spawned numerous political, social and philanthropic organizations and societies aimed at reforming and improving Britain's national ideal. As George Bernard Shaw, the novelist and social critic, observed, "Whatever else the war may do or undo, it at least turns its fierce searchlights on official, administrative and military perfunctoriness."<sup>9</sup> "National Efficiency" became the battle cry and catchphrase for such critics. Tariff reform, compulsory military service, the Boy Scout movement, state-assisted emigration, eugenics and, more broadly, the concept of social imperialism were promoted as means of rebuilding Britain's resolve and national character.<sup>10</sup>

The dominions were also concerned with the condition of their own national fabrics during this period. Imperial defence, military reform and compulsory military service similarly occupied the attention of a growing number of colonial politicians and empire-minded interests keen to reinforce the physical bonds of empire.<sup>11</sup> Supplementing these issues was a deep-seated fear in the dominions that their Anglo-Saxon heritage would be diluted by the uncontrolled influx of "racially inferior" immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and Asia. Such xenophobia reinforced Australian efforts to prevent the "yellow peril" from gaining a foothold. The rigorous implementation of the "White" Australia policy, which effectively barred the vast majority

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9. Quotation cited in Geoffrey Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency* (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1971), p. 39.

10. For a detailed discussion on the development of British social imperialist doctrine and politics, see H. John Field, *Toward a Programme of Imperial Life* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982); Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform* (New York: Allen and Unwin, 1968); Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968). For the debate on social imperialism and assisted emigration, see H.L. Malchow, "Trade Unions and Emigration in Late Victorian England: A National Lobby for State Aid", *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. XV, no. 2 (Spring 1976), pp. 92-116; H.L. Malchow, *Population Pressures: Emigration and Government in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Palo Alto, California: The Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 1979); Desmond Glynn, "'Exporting Outcast London': Assisted Emigration to Canada, 1886-1914", *Histoire sociale—Social History*, Vol. XV, no. 29 (1982), pp. 209-238; Keith Williams, "'A way out of our troubles': the politics of Empire Settlement, 1900-22", in Stephen Constantine, ed., *Emigrants and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 22-44.

11. D.C. Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defence, 1870-1914* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965); Richard A. Preston, *Canada and 'Imperial Defense'. A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth's Defense Organization, 1867-1919* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1965); John Barrett, *Falling In. Australians and 'Boy Conscriptio'n', 1911-1915* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1979); Jeffery Grey, *A Military History of Australia* (Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 67-86; Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1985), pp. 122-129; Carman Miller, "Sir Frederick William Borden and Military Reform, 1896-1911", *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. L, no. 3 (1969), pp. 265-284; Desmond Morton, "The Canadian Military Experience in the First World War, 1914-18", in R.J.Q. Adams, ed., *The Great War, 1914-18* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 79-100.

of Asiatics from entering the dominion, was paralleled by Canada's hardening nativistic attitudes towards recently arrived eastern European immigrants. To an increasing number of Canadians, these peasants clad in sheepskin coats were unassimilable and, moreover, untrustworthy. Demands were made for a more selective immigration strategy directed at promoting British migration and restricting the influx of these "dangerous" foreigners. The resignation in 1905 of Clifford Sifton, the Liberal Minister of the Interior and architect of Canada's "open door" policy, signalled this reorientation. Meanwhile, as the debates were waged over the dilution of the dominions' Anglo-Saxon heritage and the empire's military unpreparedness, the largest ever trans-oceanic migration of British subjects to the dominions was proceeding. It was an event whose significance was not lost on empire migration enthusiasts, military reformers or dominion and imperial politicians alike.<sup>12</sup>

## II

Canada was the only dominion to provide a repatriation programme for its veterans who had fought in the second Anglo-Boer War. In 1908, Canada enacted the *Volunteer Bounty Act* which authorized the award of two adjoining quarter sections or 320 acres of Dominion lands to Canadian volunteers who had served with British forces during the South African conflict. The usual fees levied for homestead entry and land patents were waived. However, each applicant was obliged to meet the homesteading provisions prescribed under the *Dominion Lands Act* of 1872. Under these provisions, each applicant was required to submit a homestead entry before December 31, 1910, and begin residence and cultivation on his claim within six months after the deadline. Alternatively, the applicant could surrender his rights to the homestead and receive scrip valued at \$160, later increased to \$500 in 1912. Scrip, which was transferable, was issued by the Minister of the Interior on warrants issued by the Minister of Militia.<sup>13</sup> The final result was a tremendous windfall for the land speculators as the land grant system deteriorated into the worst form of military gratuity. The Liberals, in opposition after the election of 1911, sharply attacked R.L. Borden's Conservative government, condemning the cash bonus system as nothing more than a "big rake-off" which allowed the speculator "an opportunity to make money without the volunteer doing what the country intended should be done."<sup>14</sup> For example, of the 1.25 million acres of scrip taken up in Saskatchewan, more than 95 percent was patented by speculators and, in Alberta, the figure was even higher at 96 percent: "a tribute

12. R.C. Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), pp. 54-74; Donald Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners'. *European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), pp. 16-64; Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia*, Vol. IV, 1901-1942 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 122-141.

13. *Statutes of Canada*, 7-8 Edward VII, Chapter 67; 2 George V, Chapter 52, 1912.

14. Canada, *Debates of the House of Commons* (hereafter *Debates*), 1911-1912, IV, col. 6450.

to the acquisitiveness of the speculator rather than to the pertinacity of the South African volunteer".<sup>15</sup>

In addition to efforts to attract Canada's own Boer War veterans to the land, there were attempts to promote the immigration and settlement of discharged British soldiers, reservists and army pensioners. In December 1906, the volatile Sam Hughes, a future Conservative Minister of Militia, tabled a resolution calling for a veterans land settlement policy on the Canadian prairies. He asserted, as he had often done in the past, that the interests of Canada and the empire would be better served with the settlement of honourably discharged British soldiers and their families than by immigrants from eastern Europe. He lamented that private enterprise had not devised a system of introducing this very valuable immigrant to Canada when it was acknowledged by the railway companies interviewed by him that ex-soldiers made good foremen and section hands. Hughes urged that the government should subsidize a settlement programme on the prairies for these men.<sup>16</sup>

The Canadian government had in fact taken some interest in the issue since before the Boer War. J.A. Smart, Deputy Minister of the Interior, believed that many discharged British soldiers possessed a limited amount of capital and, "if they knew that they could be located on farms, [they] might have sufficient experience to enable them to go on these lands or place their sons on them."<sup>17</sup> The Canadian High Commission in London reported that an increasing number of enquiries had been received from discharged soldiers contemplating emigration to Canada. Past undertakings had been limited to the distribution of emigration pamphlets to libraries at the regimental depots. However, in August 1899, the Canadian government announced that the propaganda campaign in Britain would be intensified and expanded to focus the attention of this desirable class of settler on Canada.<sup>18</sup> The outbreak of war in South Africa in October of 1899 delayed the new initiative.

After the conflict, the Canadian government launched its publicity campaign. A special edition of an emigration pamphlet aimed at British ex-soldiers and reservists was released in October 1902. "The British soldier in the last war has given ample proof of his capacity for endurance and adaptability during the vicissitudes of a most arduous campaign. The same spirit shewn in civil life in Canada will most certainly bring its assured

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15. A.S. Morton and Chester Martin, *History of Prairie Settlement and 'Dominion Lands' Policy* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1938), pp. 424-425. Of the 1,063,360 acres of scrip available in Alberta, 1,017,303 acres were patented by land speculators.

16. Canada, *Debates*, 1906-1907, I, cols. 736-739.

17. National Archives of Canada (hereafter NA), Immigration Branch files of the Department of the Interior, RG 76, vol. 202, f. 87046, part 1, Memorandum, J.A. Smart to Frank Pedley, Superintendent of Immigration, Ottawa, July 29, 1899.

18. *Ibid.*, J.G. Colmer, Secretary of the High Commission, to Pedley, August 29, 1899.

reward." Rhetoric aside, the pamphlet's real focus was on Canada's need for agriculturists with capital, tenant farmers and farm labourers.<sup>19</sup> It soon became evident that those soldiers who believed they had suitable experience and who wanted to emigrate were usually unable to pay for their overseas passage because they were unemployed. Considerable numbers of demands for an assisted passage scheme or a fare subsidization programme arrived in Ottawa. Smart was not unreceptive. He informed Frank Willard, Secretary of the Imperial Yeomanry Self-Help Employment Association, that it was not the policy of the Canadian government to grant assisted passages or grant free transportation to Canada. However, if there were a large number of willing young men eager to work as farm labourers in western Canada, it might be possible to make arrangements with a steamship company and secure a reduced rate.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, there had been discussions between Canadian immigration authorities and a group of British officers interested in establishing a settlement colony for discharged veterans and reservists which occurred immediately after the war. W.T.R. Preston, Commissioner of Emigration in London, was extremely enthusiastic about the idea. He found the organizers, representatives of the Rifleman's Aid Society, motivated by the highest ideals: men especially interested in settling fellow brother officers. Satisfied that there were no selfish aspirations behind the scheme, Preston sent a hearty endorsement to Ottawa.<sup>21</sup> The project involved the formation of a syndicate in which prospective emigrants would become shareholders. This would provide the financial security and working capital the Society needed to purchase farm land in Canada. They were anxious to obtain a list of railway companies which had land for sale, but they also sought the government's assurance that each settler was entitled to the free land grant of 160 acres provided under the *Dominion Lands Act* of 1872. Furthermore, the promoters were interested in procuring a certain number of townships or a large block of land which would be reserved for the syndicate.<sup>22</sup>

The government was willing to cooperate with the society and provide suitable land for its scheme. However, it was opposed to setting apart whole townships or reserving large tracts of land for a specific colonization project. "The difficulty", explained Smart, "is that most persons who desire to have lands reserved for a large colony want a considerable time to carry out their scheme and if this is complied with, it simply means that lands are locked up

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19. *Ibid.*, "Classes Wanted in Canada", Canadian emigration pamphlet (1902), pp. 1-3; W.T.R. Preston, Commissioner of Emigration in London, to Pedley, October 18, 1902.

20. *Ibid.*, Willard to Smart, February 18, 1903; Smart to Willard, February 23, 1903. Sir Alfred Jones of the Beaver Line Steamers offered reduced passages to British Army reservists, but evidently, Canadian authorities did not respond. *Ibid.*, Jones to Preston, October 11, 1902.

21. *Ibid.*, Preston to Smart, May 8, 1902; Preston to Pedley, May 8, 1902; Preston to Major-General Synge, June 10, 1902; Preston to Pedley, June 30, 1902.

22. *Ibid.*, Preston to Pedley, May 8, 1902.



for a long period which might otherwise be settled on."<sup>23</sup> Settlement had to be scattered. The promoters attempted to reassure the Canadian authorities that their project was organized on a sounder footing than previous group settlements. They spoke of establishing training depots in England which would prepare the settler for the task ahead. But the Dominion government was adamant. Previous experience with similar group settlements did not warrant an exception.

British Army pensioners and time-expired soldiers received attention from Canadian authorities as well. In 1905, the Department of Militia and Defence considered enlisting time-expired soldiers in Britain for service in the Canadian permanent force. They initiated discussions with the Department of the Interior to ascertain the cost of passage and whether the immigration branch would be interested in participating in the venture.<sup>24</sup> There, the matter rested for several years, when the Canadian government sought to recruit military specialists from British reservists and time-expired soldiers. The pensioners posed a more difficult problem.

The commissioners of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, approached the Canadian government in 1906 about commuting army pensions of those pensioners desirous of emigrating to Canada. The commissioners had received enquiries from pensioners who had emigrated to Canada and were anxious to have their pensions commuted in order to buy land, stock and implements. Enquiries were also received from pensioners in Britain who wanted to use their commuted pension to pay for the cost of moving themselves and their families overseas to begin homesteading.<sup>25</sup> The Department of Militia sought the Department of Interior's advice on the feasibility of settling army pensioners in western Canada, but the reply was cautious and non-committal. Each case would have to be judged on its merits, and the sole responsibility would have to be borne by the British government. Although the pensioners might possess some capital and a sincere desire to homestead, wrote W.D. Scott, Superintendent of Immigration, "[t]he only thing we can do is to advise the interested parties that there are plenty of openings in Canada for farmers, farm labourers, or persons capable of engaging in agricultural pursuits, and that any capable Army Pensioners will be very welcome as immigrants to this country."<sup>26</sup>

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23. *Ibid.*, Smart to Preston, May 20, 1902; Pedley to Preston, June 11, 1902.

24. *Ibid.*, Col. L.J. Pinault, Deputy Minister of Militia and Defence, to W.D. Scott, Superintendent of Immigration, Ottawa, November 9, 1905.

25. *Ibid.*, J. Obed Smith, Commissioner of Immigration in Winnipeg, to Scott, Ottawa, January 18, 1906; Thomas Morgan to the Secretary of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, July 8, 1909; F. Waite to the Officer Paying Pensions, Ottawa, October 10, 1909; Smith to Scott, August 20, 1909.

26. *Ibid.*, W.W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the Interior, to Col. E. Fiset, Deputy Minister of Militia and Defence, October 23, 1909; Fiset to Cory, November 19, 1909; Cory to Fiset, January 3, 1910; Scott to Smith, January 5, 1910.

The outspoken J. Obed Smith, Canada's Assistant Superintendent of Emigration in London, regretted Ottawa's refusal to encourage and assist the army pensioners. "I am quite sure", he wrote, "there will be very considerable disappointment all round at the inability of the Department to agree to what [was considered] a very simple proposition."<sup>27</sup> Smith was convinced of the contribution these experienced men would make to the efficiency of the Canadian militia units in the districts in which they settled. He proposed that the Department of Militia institute a monitoring programme in order to keep track of them in case there was a call to arms. These proposals were forwarded with the fullest endorsement of the Department of the Interior and accepted by the Department of Militia. Names and addresses of immigrant army pensioners were despatched to the Department of Militia with particulars of the branch of service in which they had previously served. This information was then communicated to commanding officers in the district where these men resided.<sup>28</sup>

As early as 1907, British and Canadian authorities had discussed the immigration of British reservists to Canada. The question arose when the Canadian government asked permission to enlist British Army reservists residing in Canada, in particular Royal Engineers, for its permanent force. The Army Council, the senior decision-making body at the War Office, granted permission.<sup>29</sup> However, in the ensuing discussions, several points were raised which led to a reassessment and clarification of the War Office's policy.

When the last remaining British regulars were withdrawn from Canada in 1906, the Canadian government had been allowed, for a time, to enlist reservists residing in Canada. Once enlisted in the Canadian permanent force, these men were immediately discharged from the British Army reserve. With the growing tension in Europe, the maintenance of a substantial reserve in Britain became increasingly important. The War Office remained disposed to meet the specialized manpower needs of the Canadian permanent force, but not at the cost of depleting its own reserve. Compounding the problem was the War Office's fear that increased emigration to Canada would further deplete its reserves. Once these men joined Canada's permanent force and became an integral part of that establishment, they were irretrievable and lost to the British Army in time of war.

The Army Council decided no longer to discharge its reservists upon enlistment in the Canadian forces. British reservists who joined the Canadian

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27. *Ibid.*, Smith to Scott, January 17 and 28, 1910.

28. *Ibid.*, Smith to Scott, January 17, 1910; Scott to Fiset, February 1 and 16, 1910; Fiset to Scott, February 14, 1910; Smith to Scott, March 1, 1910.

29. PRO, WO 163/12, Precis no. 369, November 1907, p. 172; Army Council, 97th meeting, November 7, 1907, p. 25.

forces were now liable to rejoin the Imperial army on mobilization. The Canadian government raised no objections and promised full cooperation to assist the Imperial government "in calling out and equipping for service on mobilization not only those serving with the Canadian Force, but all other reservists residing in Canada."<sup>30</sup> In the event of mobilization for war, the Canadian government also became responsible for the collection and despatch of the reservists to the required theatre of war. In return, the War Office gave Canadian military authorities permission to recruit Royal Engineers in the United Kingdom.<sup>31</sup>

The emigration of reservists again became an issue with the Army Council in 1909. The discussions were sparked by the British Immigration League of Australia which desired to facilitate the emigration to Australia of British soldiers who completed their full time service and were transferred to the reserves while stationed in India. The Quarter-Master General pointed out that any concession made to men leaving the colours in India would have to be equally conceded to men leaving the colours at other overseas stations. In fact, men leaving the colours in Great Britain might even claim the privilege of free passage to an overseas colony. This was a potentially dangerous situation from a manpower point of view as there were already 6,000 reservists living outside the United Kingdom. The Army Council did not object to granting these privileges to discharged soldiers, but "the case of members of the Reserve, who may be called on to meet a sudden national emergency, is different [and] while nothing should be done to stop reservists living in the Colonies, it would be short-sighted to encourage them to do so."<sup>32</sup> The request of the British Immigration League of Australia was denied and no alterations were recommended to the existing system which allowed reservists to live outside Great Britain.<sup>33</sup>

In 1912, the Canadian Department of Militia announced 150 vacancies for specialist positions in Canada's permanent force. Applications were invited from non-commissioned officers and men who had been transferred from the colours to the reserve, and from those whom had been discharged from the reserve. A representative went to London to negotiate an agreement with the War Office to acquire ninety artillerymen, forty-five engineers, five infantry instructors, five departmental corps staff and five army service corps personnel for the Canadian military. The men were to enlist in the Canadian permanent force for three years and were granted free third-class passage for

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30. *Ibid.*, Precis no. 369, p. 172.

31. *Ibid.*, Army Council, 97th meeting, November 7, 1907, p. 172.

32. PRO, WO 163/14, Precis no. 442, pp. 144-145.

33. *Ibid.*, Army Council, 120th meeting, November 1, 1909, p. 15.

themselves and their families.<sup>34</sup> The Canadian government believed that the offer would prove highly attractive to ex-servicemen and reservists wishing to establish themselves overseas for it allowed them the opportunity to familiarize themselves with Canadian conditions while securely employed. From a military standpoint, the advantages to the Canadian armed forces were obvious: experience, expertise and professionalism.

The War Office did not want to discourage the emigration of ex-soldiers who had completed their service and were not obliged to enter the reserve. However, the Army Council was unwilling to assist or promote the emigration of men still serving in the reserve by offering financial inducements such as advances on reserve pay or commutation of pensions.<sup>35</sup> Reservations were also raised in some quarters of the War Office that emigration was a useless exercise if no prospect of employment existed which did not utilize the training these men had received in the army. Adaptation to new conditions in an unfamiliar environment took time and, the War Office readily admitted, skills required in civilian life were quite different from those acquired in a military career.<sup>36</sup> The Army Council suggested that this difficulty could be overcome if the dominion governments guaranteed employment for these men for a period of two to three years in their permanent forces. With such a transition period in the dominions, the ex-soldier could familiarize himself with his new surroundings and better his chances of finding secure civilian employment.

The War Office fully recognized the military advantages of the scheme. “[T]hese men would form a valuable nucleus of trained soldiers [in the dominions], on which to found the more extensive systems of defence...foreshadowed by recent Imperial Conferences and local legislation. Such a nucleus would...tend to improve the training and discipline, and to promote the cohesion and military solidarity of the local forces.”<sup>37</sup> Improvements in the dominions’ forces, moreover, would very much serve British interests, for, particularly since the Boer War, the War Office had regarded the dominions’ armies as a source of reinforcements in the event of a major conflict.<sup>38</sup>

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34. NA, Governor-General’s Office, RG 7, G 21, vol. 654, f. 38691, Fiset to Military Secretary of Governor-General of Canada, September 23, 1910, October 28, 1910, and February 10, 1912; *The Record* (Sherbrooke, Quebec), September 18, 1912; *Canada*, June 1, 1912; PRO, Colonial Office Papers (hereafter CO), CO 532/37/6146, Earl Grey, Canada’s Governor-General, to Colonial Office, February 14, 1912, gives a very detailed breakdown of Canada’s specialist requirements; NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, “Under One Flag”, Canadian Pacific Railway immigration pamphlet, 1913.

35. NA, RG 7, G 21, vol. 654, f. 38691, E.W.D. Ward to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, July 14, 1910.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

38. Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership*; Preston, *Canada and ‘Imperial Defense’*.

But what types of civilian employment were suitable for British ex-servicemen? What skills had they acquired during their military careers which would facilitate the transition from the parade ground to the office or farm? Commissioner Preston believed that ex-soldiers made good farm labourers because of the physical demands of army life. Instilled with discipline, soldiers were “handy with the axe, hammer, plane, and shovel, and [had] some acquaintance with horses”. Such experience, according to Preston, ensured success.<sup>39</sup> Others disagreed. In 1895, the general manager of one of Britain’s largest railway companies had informed the select committee on Retired Soldiers and Sailors’ Employment that ex-soldiers were unsuited for the “more laborious forms of manual work”. Similarly, the secretary of the Church Army social bureau testified to another government committee in 1906 that army discipline “rather unfits a man for civil life”. Unless a “tight rein” was kept on him, he had a tendency to “break out”, finding solace through drink. Nevertheless, a much larger body of evidence suggested that ex-servicemen had been notably successful as policemen, prison warders, caretakers, storemen, watchmen and timekeepers — positions of authority and responsibility.<sup>40</sup> The question of whether British ex-servicemen made good farmers or farm labourers remained disputed and unanswered. Moreover, did they make good emigrants and could they adapt to conditions in an overseas dominion?

### III

The Naval and Military Emigration League, founded in November 1909, was the only British emigration society which dealt exclusively with former military personnel. Though lacking the reputation and connections of the earlier pioneering agencies, such as the East End Emigration Fund, the Salvation Army and the Self-Help Emigration Society, it sought to establish its presence through a determined propaganda and lobbying campaign. A vocal proponent of imperial defence, the NMEL provided a useful channel through which several dominions, and especially Canada, were able to recruit British military specialists for their permanent forces. Little, if anything, is known about this organization even though it was an active participant in the

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39. *BPP*, Cd. 2992, Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee on Civil Employment of Ex-Soldiers and Sailors; together with Digest and Index (1906), Preston testimony, Q. 1477, p. 84.

40. Report of the Select Committee on Retired Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Employment (c. 338), 1895, vi; Cd. 2992, Minutes of Evidence (1906), Colin F. Campbell testimony, Q. 1527 and Q. 1544, pp. 86-87. Officials at the Home Office and the London Metropolitan Police disagreed with the idea that ex-servicemen were suitable as policemen. Although sympathetic to the Ward committee’s objectives, they believed that employing reservists or army pensioners was a drawback. One Home Office official feared that a large influx of ex-soldiers would be a disaster because it would change the “essentially civilian character of the force”. PRO, Home Office Papers, HO 45/10456/B15912, minute by unknown Home Office official, April 1, 1907.

intense public discussion of these years about greater cooperation in imperial defence and compulsory military service.<sup>41</sup>

The general aim of the NMEL was to furnish ex-servicemen with information about employment and settlement opportunities in the dominions. The organization was chiefly concerned with the welfare of enlisted men, particularly those with little or no pension money. Although it did extend a helping hand to officers of limited means, the agency focused its attention upon ex-servicemen who were out of work and had no prospects in Britain. The League found jobs in the dominions for its clients and advanced the necessary money for passage and related expenses. It also endeavoured to operate on a self-supporting basis; recipients were encouraged to repay money that had been advanced. The League, in the words of its own literature, was not “a commercial institution, and [would] not...under any circumstances, look to make a profit. At the same time, it [was] not a charity.”<sup>42</sup>

The League’s central committee in London coordinated fund raising, propaganda and lobbying campaigns. Support was sought throughout the empire, but the NMEL focused its attention on the dominions because of their central importance in the maintenance of Britain’s strategic interests. In Canada, branches were quickly established by Francis Deverell, managing director of the British Empire Agency and member of the NMEL’s advisory committee, during a tour conducted in October-November 1910. Australian and New Zealand activities were handled by the energetic Herbert Easton, founder and honorary secretary of the British Immigration League of Australia whose headquarters were in Sydney.<sup>43</sup> The driving force behind the NMEL was its founder and honorary secretary, Edward T. Scammell. A former secretary of the Exeter Chamber of Commerce, Scammell possessed wide-ranging experience on the inter-related issues of unemployment, emigration

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41. R.J.Q. Adams and Phillip P. Pourier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900-18* (London: Macmillan Press, 1987); Peter Dennis, *The Territorial Army, 1906-1940* (Woodbridge Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1987), pp. 4-37; Ann Summers, “Militarism in Britain before the Great War”, *History Workshop*, issue 2 (Autumn 1976), pp. 104-123.

42. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, “Objects of the Naval and Military Emigration League” (1910), p. 4.

43. NA, RG 7, G 21, vol. 654, f. 38691/1, E.T. Scammell and F.N. Maude, joint honorary secretary, to Canada’s Governor-General Grey, August 13, 1910; Deverell to A.F. Sladen, Government House, Ottawa, October 28, 1910; State Library of New South Wales, Sydney (hereafter Mitchell Library), Herbert Easton Papers, MSS 302, vol. 17, register of accounts for 1912 and 1913, British Immigration League of Australia, New South Wales Branch, 1905-1943. The British Immigration League of Australia was responsible for collecting money lent to emigrants by the NMEL. Sometimes, emigrants landed in Australia without enough money and, in these cases, the British Immigration League advanced the necessary funds on behalf of the NMEL. Sums amounted to only a few pounds per settler and were used to pay incidental expenses encountered on the passage to Australia such as landing fees, rail fares, baggage, meals and accommodation.

and social relief.<sup>44</sup> He was also a member of the Royal Colonial Institute (RCI), an organization which had long taken a keen interest in imperial migration. It was in 1910 that the RCI, at the prompting of Scammell, undertook the task of mobilising the leading voluntary emigration agencies and organizations in an attempt to press upon government the value of state-aided imperial migration. And it was Scammell, with support from Herbert Easton, who encouraged the president of the RCI, the fourth Earl Grey, to push for a government-sponsored soldier settlement scheme for British ex-servicemen in the dominions after World War I.<sup>45</sup>

Other key figures included Field Marshall Lord Roberts, the NMEL's president, and William St. John Brodrick (later Viscount Midleton), formerly Secretary of State for War between 1900 and 1903. Roberts had commanded the victorious British forces in South Africa. Appalled by the sloth and unpreparedness of the British military machine during the campaign, he became a staunch advocate of military reform. In particular, he sought the introduction of compulsory military service. As president of the National Service League, he was able to utilize his immense popularity and military expertise to attract wide-spread public and professional support. Viscount Midleton was another prominent advocate of military reform. His attempts to improve military efficiency and introduce much needed changes during and after the Boer War, however, had attracted a great deal of intense opposition from political colleagues and senior service personnel alike. His inability to overcome this acrimony was a factor in his transfer to the India Office in the autumn of 1903. Nevertheless, his failure at the War Office did not dampen his

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44. The Reverend E.T. Scammell was born in Devon in 1845. A builders' merchant and honorary pastor of the Teignmouth Baptist Church, Scammell also possessed a keen interest in local affairs, the administration of the poor law and the relief of poverty. He served on the Newton Abbot Board of Guardians as a member of the Teignmouth Local Board and, in 1894, gave evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour in which he advocated a system of county labour exchanges supervised by the Board of Trade. Testimony was also given in support of a nation-wide emigration scheme which would reduce unemployment and destitution among Britain's lower orders. His avid interest in philanthropy was imparted to his son, Ernest Henry Scammell, who became one of the driving forces behind Canada's wartime rehabilitation and retraining programmes for disabled and repatriated servicemen. José Harris, *Unemployment and Politics: A Study in English Social Policy, 1886-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 280-281; *Western Morning News*, September 24, 1935. For an analysis of E.H. Scammell's career, see Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle*.

45. Mitchell Library, Easton Papers, MSS 302, Box 6, "After the War (Proposals for Employment)", pamphlet published by the British Immigration League in conjunction with the RCI, December 1914; Durham University, Department of Palaeography and Diplomatic, fourth Earl Grey Papers, Grey to Easton, January 17, 1916; Kent Fedorowich, "The Assisted Emigration of British Ex-Servicemen to the Dominions, 1914-1922", in Constantine, ed., *Emigrants and Empire*, pp. 45-71.

enthusiasm for military affairs or his conviction that military reform was vital for the continued maintenance of British imperial power.<sup>46</sup>

Privately, several senior Colonial Office officials sympathized with Scammell's organization, particularly its promotion of imperial defence. However, they remained adamant that the Imperial government should not involve itself in any way in the encouragement of emigration. Committed to the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, successive British administrations had constantly repelled demands by private emigration agencies and charities to undertake a more active role in channelling emigrants to the dominions. People like produce, the Imperial government argued, must not be treated any differently in a free trade economy. But it was the financial burden which Whitehall most wanted to avoid and any hint of government monetary assistance toward emigration immediately raised the ire of the Colonial Office.

In February 1909, nine months before the foundation of the NMEL, Scammell had approached the Colonial Office with a proposal to assist British Army pensioners in emigrating to the dominions. He advocated the commutation of military pensions, in whole or in part, and urged the government to provide cheap passage for the pensioners to the dominions, and accommodation and temporary employment once the pensioners had arrived there. The cash value of the commuted pension would defray the costs of passage and accommodation. As a safeguard, any sum advanced would not be given to the pensioner until he had sufficient time to adjust to the colonial environment, or where possible, bills for passage money and travelling expenses would be paid directly. This would not only enable the ex-soldier to "judge his own fitness for colonial life and the prospects offered him in that colony", but also prevent the unnecessary squandering of funds by the pensioner.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, C.P. Lucas, an Assistant Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, regarded Scammell's request for pension commutation "a very dangerous thing", and he reported that the representative from the Local Government Board "spoke most strongly" against the entire proposition.<sup>48</sup>

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46. For an examination of the reform activities of Roberts and Middleton, see J.K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army, 1899-1914* (London: Methuen, 1938); Nicholas d'Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy: Defence Administration in Peacetime Britain, 1902-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); W.S. Hamer, *The British Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1885-1905* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970); A.V. Tucker, "The Issue of Army Reform in the Unionist Government, 1903-5", *Historical Journal*, Vol. IX, no. 1 (1966), pp. 90-100; Lowell J. Satre, "St. John Brodrick and Army Reform, 1901-1903", *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. XV, no. 2 (Spring 1976), pp. 117-139; David James, *Lord Roberts* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1954), pp. 411-463; Adams and Pourier, *The Conscription Controversy*, pp. 1-48.

47. PRO, CO 532/16/5190, Scammell to Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, February 12, 1909; WO 32/6546, "Report on the Commutation of Army Pensions", n.d. (probably 1913).

48. PRO, CO 532/16/5190, minute by Lucas, February 1909.



In Parliament, the Imperial government reiterated its opposition to financial gratuities to assist the emigration of ex-soldiers and reservists. Sir Clement Kinloch-Cooke, a leading editor, parliamentarian and an avid emigration lobbyist, asked the Secretary of State for War, R.B. Haldane, whether the government had considered the recommendations regarding emigration tabled in 1906 by the Ward Committee on the Civil Employment of Ex-Soldiers and Sailors. In particular, had the Secretary examined the possibility of negotiating an agreement with the dominions to advance the money necessary to cover the travelling expenses of the ex-servicemen? Furthermore, had the Secretary investigated the dominions' views on the matter?<sup>49</sup> Haldane replied that no concrete steps had been taken to learn the views of the dominions and he emphasized that the government was restricted in what it could do with respect to assisting the emigration of reservists. Haldane echoed the War Office's concerns that state-assisted military migration implied a needless drain of manpower. Indeed, it was for this very reason that the War Office had rejected the recommendations of both the Ward Committee and the Tennyson Committee on Agricultural Settlements in British Colonies to provide state-aided emigration to the dominions for selected ex-servicemen and their families.<sup>50</sup> However, Scammell and Kinloch-Cooke were able to extract one concession from the minister, when he endorsed the emigration and employment of time-expired soldiers in the permanent forces of the dominions. A limited success, these preliminary enquiries had far-reaching implications, for they compelled the Imperial government, in light of the potential manpower drain, to start thinking seriously about the discharge, transfer and employment of its reservists and time-expired men in the dominions.<sup>51</sup>

The commutation issue did not, however, disappear. War Office statistics indicate that between 1909 and 1913, a total of 2,201 ex-servicemen were allowed to commute small portions of their pensions in order to raise investment capital for business ventures, the purchase of houses, property or furniture, debt repayment and education. The amounts of money advanced were calculated using a formula which deducted fractions or numbers of pence from the ex-servicemen's daily entitlement over a period of weeks or months. Deductions from the pensioner's daily allowance ranged from half a penny to

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49. United Kingdom, House of Commons Debates (hereafter *Hansard*), *Hansard*, fifth series, Vol. XIV, 1909, cols. 1787-1788.

50. *BPP*, Cd. 2991, Report of the Committee on Civil Employment of Ex-Soldiers and Sailors; together with Appendix (1906); Cd. 2978, Departmental Committee on Agricultural Settlements in British Colonies: Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed to Consider Mr. Rider Haggard's Report on Agricultural Settlements in British Colonies, I (1906). National Army Museum, Field Marshall Lord Roberts Papers, Add. 7101-23-215, "Paper containing Copy of Instructions issued by the War Office to the Various Military Commands with reference to giving Technical Instruction to Soldiers to Fit them for Civil Life", December 18, 1906.

51. *Hansard*, fifth series, Vol. XIV, 1909, cols. 1787-1788; NA, RG 7, G 21, vol. 654, f. 38691, War to Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, July 14, 1910.

a maximum of twelve pence; the government insisting that one shilling per day remain fixed as a minimum to be left uncommuted. The imposition of this qualification was necessary, argued one War Office official, because it prevented the ex-servicemen from becoming destitute and a public charge, "which is the primary intention of a pension". Only a small percentage of the commutations failed or were deemed unsatisfactory by the War Office which suggested that the vast majority of these cases were successful. But bureaucrats remained unconvinced of the experiment's merits. "We always have these misc[ellaneous] suggestions from optimists who see the worthy pensioner making a little fortune out of a little capital", minuted one official. "But I have seen a great deal of commutation both for officers and men, and I am clear that it is very rarely to their advantage."<sup>52</sup>

Despite the British government's insistence that commuted pensions should not be used to facilitate the emigration of ex-servicemen, some army pensioners were given permission to do precisely that. A.W. Street, a former Sergeant Major in the Royal Engineers, informed the secretary of the Chelsea Hospital that he had secured employment in Nova Scotia only three days after he had landed. Already a homeowner, probably paid for in part by £217 from his commuted pension, he looked forward to building another house during the forthcoming summer. In 1912, another army pensioner, G.A. Walter, a former sergeant in the Army Service Corps, commuted £155 to help finance his passage and make a new start in Winnipeg. Similarly, Fred Davison explained that he was not in the least sorry for leaving his native Scotland. With the help of £107 from his commuted pension, the former sergeant from the Royal Garrison Artillery arrived in Sydney, Australia, and within a week, had found remunerative employment.<sup>53</sup> Although there was no indication that these men were assisted by the NMEL, such testimonials were proof that the British government, contrary to its official position, assisted a number of time-expired soldiers to emigrate. Figures for the calendar years 1909-1911 reveal that of the 1,393 commuted pensions, 334 or approximately 24 percent were used to offset emigration expenses, over half of whom embarked for Canada.<sup>54</sup>

Despite initial Colonial Office objections and War Office reservations, the first 18 months were encouraging for the NMEL. There were over 2,100 requests for information and advice. Canada received the largest share of the 268 ex-servicemen who did emigrate with assistance from the League: 137 embarking on civil employment and 46 joining the Canadian military. Australia took 78 while New Zealand and South Africa gained only one

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52. WO 32/6546, J.B. Seely to Douglas Hall, M.P., March 13, 1913; minute by J.A. Flynn, War Office official, February-March 1913. The commutation statistics for 1909-1911 are also contained in this file.

53. *Ibid.*, A.W. Street, G.A. Walters and Fred Davison to the secretary, Chelsea Hospital, February 9, January 26 and 14, 1913.

54. WO 32/6546, Analysis of Commutation Cases, n.d. (probably 1913).

ex-service emigrant each.<sup>55</sup> The numbers for the following 18 months (July 1911 to December 1912) more than doubled. Of the 671 ex-servicemen who emigrated from England, 421 embarked for Canada while 239 travelled to Australia. Once again, the numbers destined for South Africa and New Zealand proved negligible. Hardly surprising about the Canadian statistics was that those undertaking military employment outstripped those with jobs in the civil sector: 221 compared to 157, respectively. A new dimension was demonstrated by the statistics with 43 ex-servicemen entering police work in Canada.<sup>56</sup>

The NMEL was pleased with its accomplishments in three years of operation. Approximately 1,500 men, women and children had emigrated under the auspices of the League. Even more gratifying was the close cooperation the League enjoyed with the various regimental associations who contributed to the League's coffers and to the fares of ex-servicemen and their families. This was of considerable importance because it relieved some of the financial burden and allowed the NMEL to help a number of the less fortunate men who needed greater assistance. In 1912, the League advanced money to 208 emigrants and obtained reductions on passage for a further 25. Not surprisingly, in light of the Canadian government's offer of 150 vacancies in the permanent force, the Dominion government paid full fare for 70 men procured through the NMEL. In the spring of 1913, the remaining 80 candidates emigrated to join the Canadian permanent force. Once again, they were obtained through the League; 53 for the Royal Canadian Garrison Artillery and 27 for the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery.<sup>57</sup>

Despite growing confidence within the League, its members remained determined not to rest on their laurels. The executive warned that if it had not been for a timely contribution from a private enthusiast, the entire organization would have ceased operations. Much more could be done for an ever growing number of applicants, but inadequate funding was preventing the League from effectively carrying out its objectives. An appeal was made to the membership to increase its donations and endeavour to enrol new members to broaden the financial resources of the organization.<sup>58</sup> A further appeal was made to the public for a working fund of £10,000. The League suggested that it was nothing for the Imperial and Dominion governments to contribute £2,000 each to the fund.

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55. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Report of the Naval and Military Emigration League (1911), p. 7.

56. Royal Commonwealth Society Archives (hereafter RCSA), T.E. Sedgwick Papers, report of the Naval and Military Emigration League (1912), p. 5.

57. NA, RG 7, G 21, vol. 654, f. 38691, F. Jarvis, Acting Deputy Minister of Militia, to Military Secretary of Governor-General of Canada, April 29, 1913; RCSA, Sedgwick Papers, report of the Naval and Military Emigration League (1912), pp. 2-5.

58. RCSA, Sedgwick Papers, report of the Naval and Military Emigration League (1912), pp. 3-4.

What a trifle it is to give new hope in life to some thousand men who have served their country well each year; to add a battalion...each year to the defensive forces of the Dominions—men whose vital energies and physical strength will be conserved instead of sinking through despair into inefficiency, as it too often does under conditions at home; to spread a leaven of men of British blood, disciplined and filled with reverence for the flag, through Canada, Australia, and South Africa!<sup>59</sup>

Similarly, the League had to ensure that its critics did not undermine its reputation as an imperial philanthropic agency. The League took great pains to remind its supporters that it did not advocate emigration, **except** in those cases where time-expired ex-servicemen found it impossible to find employment in Britain. From its inception in 1909, the NMEAL stressed that no man would be sent to the dominions unless he had a definite offer of employment.<sup>60</sup> The League was determined to give ex-servicemen a chance to prosper and become wage earners in another part of the empire rather than sink to the depths of poverty and become “human wreckage, a condition already considered to be too prevalent amongst these men”.<sup>61</sup> The great need was for further cooperation from the Imperial and Dominion authorities.

#### IV

In August 1912, Scammell arrived in Canada for a two- to three-month tour to visit all the provinces and investigate the civil and military openings each offered to the League’s clients.<sup>62</sup> Before any proposals were prepared and submitted to the Canadian government, Scammell thought it wise to confer with the provincial committees of the League as to the availability of job opportunities for an increased number of ex-servicemen. He also addressed meetings all across the country, receiving wide press coverage and a good deal of enthusiastic support. J.B. Walker, Superintendent of Immigration in Winnipeg, endorsed Scammell’s proposals because they constituted “the most sane, sensible and practical immigration policy that had ever been submitted to him”.<sup>63</sup>

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59. A reprint of an article by Gerard Fiennes entitled, “Old Soldiers of the Empire” which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 9, 1912.

60. “Objects of the Naval and Military Emigration League” (1910), p. 4.

61. RCSA, Sedgwick Papers, copy of an undated appeal for funds by the Naval and Military Emigration League.

62. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Scammell to Walter Scott, Premier of Saskatchewan, August 17, 1912; Saskatchewan Archives Board (hereafter SAB), Scammell to Premier Scott, November 29, 1912; Premier Scott to Scammell, December 19, 1912; Scammell to Premier Scott, December 23, 1912, Walter Scott Papers, M1-IV-92(3), pp. 41170-73 and pp. 41177-80. To avoid confusion in the text and footnotes between the two Scotts, W.D. Scott, the federal civil servant, will be cited simply as Scott while Premier Walter Scott will always be cited as Premier Scott.

63. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Scammell to Robert Rogers, Minister of the Interior (1911-1912), October 29, 1912.

Scammell submitted the proposals to the Minister of the Interior, Robert Rogers, in late October. He informed the minister that he had been empowered to ask the Canadian government if they were prepared to advance fares, with or without interest, to carefully selected candidates and if they were prepared to arrange, through the immigration officers in cooperation with the Canadian committees, to secure repayment of the money advanced.<sup>64</sup> In a further letter to W.J. Roche, Rogers's successor, Scammell proposed that in the event of the Canadian government agreeing to the NMEL's fare subsidization scheme, the League would be willing to allow Canadian emigration officials in Britain to participate in the selection of prospective ex-servicemen. The League would be wholly responsible for guaranteeing advances made to immigrants and sought to reassure Canadian authorities that the machinery existed to make the system of repayment work.

There was a further consideration. Scammell wanted the applicants to be regarded as a special class because of the sacrifices they had made to the empire, their potential as good settlers and as a source of manpower in future conflicts. The ex-servicemen, he insisted, were an investment in the future strength of the empire. Scammell argued that monetarily, they constituted a "direct financial advantage" to Canada because many brought capital with them. In the case of pensioners and reservists, they were receiving total allowances and gratuities from the British government in the neighbourhood of \$650,000 to \$700,000 annually.<sup>65</sup> If the Canadian government accepted the "experimental arrangement" with the League for the immigration of 1,000 British ex-servicemen, a "considerable addition" to Canada's "means of defence" would be achieved justifying the future expansion of the scheme.<sup>66</sup>

Canadian immigration authorities found Scammell's request for government financial assistance "somewhat unusual".<sup>67</sup> However, the Department of Militia welcomed the NMEL's offer to place a member of its executive committee at the disposal of the Canadian government to assist in the screening and selection of successful applicants. Canadian authorities also agreed to let the League make all the necessary passage arrangements for the ex-soldiers and their families. To facilitate smoother communications in London between the NMEL and the Canadian government, the Department of Militia requested that Lieutenant-Colonel P.E. Thacker, previously attached to the General Staff

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64. SAB, "Particulars and Proposals in regard to the Immigration of Ex-service Men from the United Kingdom submitted by E.T. Scammell, Honorary Secretary of the Naval and Military Emigration League, to the Hon. the Minister of the Interior, Ottawa", Walter Scott Papers, M1-IV-92(3); NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Scammell to Rogers, October 29, 1912.

65. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821340, part 1, Scammell to W.J. Roche, Minister of the Interior (1912-1917), November 14, 1912.

66. *Ibid.*, Scammell to Scott, November 19, 1912.

67. *Ibid.*, Scott to Cory, May 7, 1912.

at the War Office, be temporarily posted as the Canadian government's liaison officer with the NMEL. The War Office complied.<sup>68</sup> It also agreed to conduct medical examinations of applicants prior to embarkation on behalf of the Canadian government. The War Office acceded to this request after a number of men had been refused entry into Canada on the grounds of being medically unfit.<sup>69</sup> Though the cases were isolated, they had received wide publicity and had proven embarrassing on both sides of the Atlantic.

The majority of the ex-servicemen whom the League sent to Canada were found satisfactory, but the government was extremely disappointed by the very small percentage who turned to farming. As early as 1903, senior immigration officials had reported that ex-soldiers rarely made good farmers in Canada and those who did take up farming seldom remained on the land for any length of time "as most of them do not seem to care for steady work".<sup>70</sup> W.D. Scott, Superintendent of Immigration in Ottawa, reported that "whether it is the earlier training and lack of initiative, I do not know, but in any case, they make poor farmers...They seldom take to agricultural work, preferring rather to stay in the cities where numbers of them can be found working as elevator men, janitors, etc."<sup>71</sup> This trend continued right up to the outbreak of war. Of the 314 subsidized ex-servicemen who arrived in Canada during 1913,

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68. NA, RG 7, G 21, vol. 654, f. 38691, Fiset to Military Secretary of Governor-General, April 20, 1912.

69. *Ibid.*, E.F. Jarvis, Acting Deputy Minister of Militia, to Military Secretary of Governor-General, June 8, 1911; Fiset to Military Secretary, April 20, 1912.

70. NA, RG 76, vol. 202, f. 87046, part 1, T. Southworth, Director of Colonisation, Toronto, to Scott, January 17, 1903.

71. *Ibid.*, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Scott to Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior (1905-1910), December 10, 1910; Scott to Cory, October 31, 1913. The problem with the majority of ex-servicemen, according to the NMEL, was that they were relatively unskilled and upon receiving their discharge were thrown immediately into an overcrowded, competitive labour market. At the "stroke of a pen", the soldier was transformed from a "warrior" into the ranks of the unemployed. It was a "pathetic tragedy", a "penalty of patriotism", and quite undeserving of men who had sacrificed the best years of their lives serving the colours. It was understood that openings existed in the dominions for eager but unskilled ex-servicemen who were willing to work in the rural districts of Australia as boundary riders, stockmen, station hands, cooks, handymen or agricultural labourers. Canada reportedly offered employment for discharged soldiers as city or mounted police, elevator attendants, janitors, caretakers, chauffeurs, stablemen, grooms, bank messengers, commissionaires, conductors, railway navvies, agricultural labourers and "places of trust generally". These were hardly jobs aimed at improving imperial defence. *The Standard of Empire*, December 16, 1910 and July 3, 1913; NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Interim Report of the Naval and Military Emigration League (February 1911); E.T. Scammell to Arthur Hawkes, January 15, 1912, published in Hawkes, *Special Report on Immigration dealing mainly with Co-operation Between the Dominion and Provincial Governments and the Movement of People from the United Kingdom to Canada* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1912), pp. 87-89. House of Lords Record Office, Lord Beaverbrook Papers, BBK B49, John Cosgrove to Max Aitken, May 8, 1912.

only 29 took up farming.<sup>72</sup> British Army pensioners proved to be particularly troublesome and the most embarrassing from the Department of the Interior's viewpoint. After several disappointing placements, Scott warned the Canadian High Commission that army pensioners were better left in the mother country. "Our Employment Agents will scarcely touch any more charitable organization or army pensioners...Almost without exception they complain that such men are worse than useless, owing to the trouble they give in being placed."<sup>73</sup>

Scott advised the government not to contemplate or initiate an increased absorption of the ex-soldier class.<sup>74</sup> Landing permits would be granted to ex-servicemen provided they could pay the \$200 landing fee. Immigration agents had the authority to waive the monetary regulations only if the men were going to assured agricultural employment, and not if they were "destined to employment other than farm work".<sup>75</sup> W.W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the Interior, agreed and the monetary regulations were reintroduced. Landing fees would be waived only in special circumstances such as the ones regarding agricultural labourers, farmers and those enlisting with the Canadian forces or the Royal North West Mounted Police; or in cases when certain classes of unskilled labour were not available in Canada or within easy access of the district where the immigrant was being employed.<sup>76</sup>

In March 1914, Canadian authorities made it abundantly clear to Scammell that the "need of Canada is first and always for men who are prepared to work on the land and that...this is the only class of men who should be encouraged to emigrate."<sup>77</sup> Scammell raised no objections and offered to make a concerted effort to secure ex-servicemen recruited in the rural areas of Britain who would have agricultural knowledge and experience as well as the willingness and determination to succeed on a farm. In order to ensure success, he asked that arrangements be made with local farmers to take on inexperienced as well as experienced farmers for a twelve-month period.<sup>78</sup> Scammell continued to maintain that the lack of the necessary passage money

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72. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Cory memorandum, January 12, 1914. During 1913, 418 ex-servicemen arrived in Canada under the auspices of the League; 104 made it to Canada under their own means; and 198 of the 314 who received landing permits from the London immigration office were assisted by League funds. The largest number of ex-servicemen, 198, entered the Canadian military force. *Ibid.*, Smith to Scott, February 16, 1914.

73. *Ibid.*, vol. 202, f. 87046, part 1, Scott to Smith, March 6, 1910; E. Terrill, Government Employment Agent, Wooler, Ontario, to Scott, April 25, 1910.

74. *Ibid.*, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, Scott to Cory, October 31, 1913.

75. *Ibid.*, Scott to Cory, February 24, 1914; Scott to Smith, November 11, 1913; Scott to Smith, December 5, 1913.

76. *Ibid.*, Scott to a Mr. Mitchell, December 18, 1913; Scott to Cory, February 24, 1914; Cory to Scott, February 27, 1914; Smith to Scammell, March 20, 1914; Scott to Smith, April 1, 1914.

77. *Ibid.*, interview between Scammell, Scott, Smith and the London representatives of the Provincial governments, March 19, 1914.

78. *Ibid.*

was still the most inhibiting factor to the entire programme of ex-soldier migration. But he was pleased that the Canadian government upheld its policy of waiving the monetary regulations for new arrivals undertaking agricultural employment or occupations deemed as special circumstances.<sup>79</sup>

## V

The outbreak of war in August 1914 effectively ended the NMEL's operations, but not before a total of 2,388 men, women and children had emigrated to the dominions under the League's auspices.<sup>80</sup> Canada remained the favoured dominion, in part because of its geographical proximity, and it would seem that the Canadian government did more than any other dominion to assist British veterans. Certainly, Canada benefited by the recruitment of these professional soldiers into its permanent force. They made an important contribution to the dominion's ability successfully to shoulder an increased burden of responsibility for its own defence. Canada's increasing military capacity, in turn, was to Britain's advantage both by reducing commitments for the British forces, and improving the pool of potential reinforcements that might be available in the event of a major war in Europe or Asia. The collaboration by both governments with a philanthropic organization to promote Canadian military development was also significant for it demonstrated the willingness of some officials to use private means to meet specialized emigration requirements, especially at a time when the British government steadfastly refused to intervene in any way in the promotion of everyday emigration.

However, the NMEL's achievements must not be overstated. Despite its network of local, voluntary committees and the endorsements from many prominent imperialists throughout the empire, it operated on a shoestring and failed to secure large-scale official support. Moreover, it failed to overcome Britain's commitment to *laissez-faire*. Indeed, the fear of a European war and the need to keep military reserves at home was the British government's overriding concern which, in the final analysis, was the greatest single factor limiting the NMEL's operations. In the end, it did little more than assist in recruiting a few specialists for the Canadian permanent force and gave a handful of veterans, who might not have had the chance otherwise, the opportunity to start a new life overseas. Nonetheless, the NMEL's activities highlighted the growing importance which some elements of Edwardian society attached to the welfare of the empire's soldiery.

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79. *The Standard of Empire*, July 3, 1913; NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, interview between Scammell *et al.*, March 19, 1914.

80. NA, RG 76, vol. 585, f. 821430, part 1, report of the Naval and Military Emigration League (1913). The NMEL was absorbed by another ex-servicemen's association founded in 1917, the Comrades of the Great War.



During World War I, many of the issues and problems concerning post-service employment, the reintroduction of ex-servicemen into civilian life and assisted migration intensified as politicians and reconstruction planners began to wrestle with the monumental task of retraining and rehabilitating millions of returning veterans. Yet, at the same time, it appeared that some of the lessons rehearsed prior to World War I had been "forgotten". That soldiers were less inclined to undertake agricultural work, for example, seemed to have been ignored by many politicians and officials who, in the latter stages of the conflict, were determined to implement comprehensive soldier settlement policies throughout the empire after the war. To reward ex-servicemen for their patriotism and self-sacrifice was honourable and understandable. But the return to civilian life for many World War I veterans, as it had been for their predecessors, remained a difficult and lonely experience.

