

THE HAILEYBURIAN and COBALT POST

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Remembrance Day

By Com. Dave Burgess, M.C.,
Dominion President, Canadian Legion, B. E. S. L.

The conscience of Canada is contained in the poppy. Actually, it's only a piece of fabric. But it symbolizes sacrifice, courage and hope. Above all, it symbolizes Remembrance. Each year over 5 1/2 million of them bloom in Canada. They become the persistent recurring voice of conscience which reminds us of our debt to the dead and our duty to the living. Who can look at the poppy without questioning whether or not he is repaying that debt to the dead?

Obviously it is impossible to fully repay this debt. But how can we repay it even in part? A man dies on the battlefield at the peak of youth, in superb physical and mental condition; a man who otherwise had a world to win. But the man dies and a thousand dreams die with him, and the light of hope goes out back home. How does anybody repay such a sacrifice even in part?

On November 11th our conscience must stand trial before a jury of the fallen. The question at issue must be: have we kept faith with those who died in our every day life?

It is one thing to stand bareheaded at a cenotaph for two minutes of silence on each November 11th. But how are we to ensure that the deeds of the dead will not completely mock our words? I would like to quote from an editorial published by the Legion headquarters:

"Last November I stood at a war memorial, feeling sick of heart, hypocritical and afraid. We were dangerously close to a third world war — perhaps the last. There was much brave talk, many itchy trigger-fingers and an exceedingly grave situation.

"Beyond the morning coats, the uniforms, the wreaths and the monument, I saw another procession of men. I saw men like my father at a place called Passchendale. I've made a point of learning to spell that name because two square miles of land cost us 16,404 casualties there. And there were other places which don't even have a name, like the 3,000 yards where Canada suffered 24,029 casualties in moving some forgotten front 4,000 yards. That works out to more than six casualties a yard.

"I wondered how they were responding to the nation's two-minute tribute.

"After Dieppe, in 1942, I talked to a life-long friend who led a platoon in the assault. Within minutes of hitting the beach, he was cut down and his platoon was almost completely wiped out. He was unconscious when somebody dragged him to a boat. After months in a hospital, his speech was still labored and he suffered from amnesia. But he was one of the lucky ones. They left 3,369 of their 5,000-man force on that beach.

"The engagement at Dieppe never did make much sense. But last November, in the shadow of a third war, it became as meaningless as the storming of some castle in feudal times.

"Beyond the monument, I saw another life-long friend. He had sat impatiently in England for four years. He finally went into action on D-day, and was killed on D-Day plus two.

"Above the sombre clouds which hung over the stillness of a nation remembering, I saw the immortal figures of the bomber crews. With each dusk, they went aloft to challenge the mystery and terror of the infinite night. History has recorded what they did. But history will never record the stunned expression on their tired faces as they returned from an eight-hour raid. History will never catch the look in the eyes of exhausted men at briefing; eyes which tried not to notice the absence of friends and tried to forget the glow from wreckage which marked the path of fallen bombers.

"What did they know about reasons for dying? Most of them never had an opportunity to learn why they were living. Yet they died casting one lingering thought homeward, desperately believing in the long hope that the reason lay somewhere back in Canada. Even if, in moments of bitterness, they blamed the war on the failure of the preceding generation, hope that the future would be better died hard."

How can our puny act of Remembrance ever hope to repay the dead? How can this spirit of Remembrance be translated into action, into deeds which occupy our energies for 365 days each year?

The Canadian Legion has found a way. Through our poppy campaign, members can assist the living as they remember the dead. The "living" in this instance comprises the disabled veterans, their families and the families of the war dead. Not all these people need help. But a good many of them do, in spite of pensions and allowances provided by the government. Many of the widows and orphans are in grim need. They enjoy little of the prosperity which the dead or the disabled wrought with their sacrifices. To them war is not a diminishing anniversary, a period of past privations and memories. To them, war is a continuing thing which still makes an impact on day to day living; war is something which still shines in the eyes of a hungry child, coughing in a cold shack.

We have these things, hunger, cold and lack of clothing with us today. These are legacies of war which some of us may tend to forget too soon. Even D.V.A. assistance cannot

hope to eliminate this need. It helps. But what happens to a family on pension when one member falls seriously ill, or if there is a fire or some other accident? And assuming that a man is unable to work yet does not receive a pension — and there are such cases — who feeds and shelters his family?

D.V.A. is restricted by regulations in dealing with such people. But the Legion, through its poppy trust fund, is able to step beyond regulations into the realm of compassion and understanding.

The poppy means assistance which reaches into almost every Canadian community. The funds derived from the distribution of poppies must be used for such welfare purposes or for service bureau work. They cannot be used for other branch purposes.

Next week you, as a citizen of Canada, will have an opportunity to make a tangible expression of thanks and Remembrance to those who died. You can wear a poppy. But as a Legion member you can have the distinct privilege of going one step further. You can do your utmost to see that others wear a poppy; that they listen to the voice of Canada's conscience.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Norm;

In answer to your letter for a community center here in Haileybury I am sorry that I have to disagree.

First I am not against a project like that of which you undertook and may I say that you were for the interest of the children and general public.

The thing I am against is that you or no one can come out with a manner to pay for this or to carry it on after, as it cannot, certainly, carry itself. You only have to look at New Liskeard to see that it can not be done. They have twice the population that we have and it is still a white elephant.

Taking New Liskeard as an example again, and if I was informed correctly, they paid \$1.00 for the building and it cost them approx. \$30,000. to renovate. They have, as I said or mentioned before, twice the population we have, are taxed to the hilt, and still can not make ends meet. What do you expect us to do when we may have to spend \$125,000 and only have half the Liskeard population. I feel that in a position like that there is nothing to discuss.

Second, we have one white elephant at the moment in the form of a glorified garbage can which is appropriately painted so why look for another. Ask the council the cost of operating said garbage can and compare it with hiring a truck and a man at \$450 to \$500 a month. Quite a few truck drivers would like the opportunity to serve for that kind of money. If the cost of operating is let known please include depreciation and the fact that by the time the garbage can is paid for it will be in such a state that we will need a new one, say, in about three more years. In other words 12,000 dollars gone in the dump not counting the extra it cost to operate per month and the bulldozing done at the dump which we would not have to pay for if let out on tender.

Norm, I do not mean to criticize you, but I would appreciate it if you could get Cobalt, North Cobalt and Haileybury interested and work out a cost of operations after it is built and also to build it. After that the people may get interested. Nobody is willing to commit themselves unless they know what it will involve and cost them.

I know that our children need the sports as it builds sound minds

and bodies as the saying goes, but remember that they also need clothes, food and education and if we are taxed to the hilt, which I know we will be if this project

goes ahead, one of these latter things will be deprived.

This may not be worded too good and maybe I did not get my point across but I speak the way I think, so I will not apologize.

Yours truly,
Ben Bourget.



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