

ARMY DOCTOR FLAYS PRESS

General Fotheringham Says Base Hospital is Doing Its Duty

"SOLDIERS SATISFIED"

Offending Newspapers Would be Shut Up if He Had His Way

Declaring that the Base Hospital is adequately fulfilling the duty for which it exists, refusing to admit that it had been crowded beyond its capacity, and accepting full responsibility for all advice on hospital matters which he has given to his superiors, Surgeon-General J. T. Fotheringham, Acting Director-General of Medical Services for Canada, was the chief witness at the resumed inquest last night into the death of Cadet F. N. Davidson, R.A.F., at the Gerrard street institution. He made a bitter attack on the press and the public of Toronto for its criticism of conditions in the hospitals, stating that such things had occurred nowhere else in the Dominion, and that if he had his way the offending papers would be shut up for one week. Last night's hearing removed the inquiry from a merely local affair to a Dominion one. In addition to General Fotheringham, Colonel L. E. W. Irving, Assistant Director of Medical Services for Military District No. 2, and Dr. C. K. Clarke, former Superintendent of the Toronto General Hospital, gave evidence. Lieutenant-Colonel Oliver Mowat Biggar, Judge Advocate-General at Ottawa; Mr. C. C. Robinson, acting on instructions from the Department of Justice, and other military officials closely followed the proceedings. Mayor Church watched the inquiry very closely.

Mr. R. H. Greer, K.C., County Crown Attorney, was making an effort to find out who "Ottawa" was, the party referred to at the previous hearing as to blame for inadequate hospital accommodation in this military district, when General Fotheringham expressed his attitude toward the press. Witness said that while the Base Hospital was fulfilling the purposes for which it exists, he would not hold it up as an example to be followed by all other hospitals. He declared in favor of the fresh air treatment for pneumonia.

Would Muzzle the Press.

The Crown Attorney then made an effort to ascertain from Gen. Fotheringham the question raised in several newspapers as to who "Ottawa" was. Witness said it was not he, but "my judgment is that the Press Censor should shut them up for one week."

"You are not the first martial man that wanted the press muzzled."

"I know what he (the Censor) would like to do," emphatically declared witness.

"It is too bad he hasn't the courage to carry out his convictions."

"It isn't his fault."

"Well, it is too bad that somebody who has the courage of his convictions doesn't speak out," said Mr. Greer. "Courage seems to be the outstanding weakness."

"Hear, hear! I quite agree with you."

"Are you going to tell us, or can you find out who is responsible?"

"If you ask the right men you can find out."

"Who is the right man to ask?"

"The official mouthpiece of each

department is the Deputy Minister," said the witness.

Blames the Press.

"You are not responsible for the condition of the hospitals here?"

"I am responsible for the advice that I give." General Fotheringham

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modation. Under his regime 400 patients could be accommodated in what is now the Base Hospital. A staff of about 400 was housed as well. The top story was always considered dangerous through fire.

The inquest will continue this evening.

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said that he did not hear dissatisfaction expressed about the Base Hospital. He believed the public had been given that opinion by the press, and that it is fostered. Witness said he was convinced that the primary man in the hospital was satisfied. "The soldier under temptation," General Fotheringham said, "was just that kind of a liar, just the same as the rest of us; not worse than the rest of us and not a bit better."

Is Not Satisfied.

General Fotheringham explained at the outset that he had full charge of military medical services, and that Major-General Carleton Jones is in charge of the hospitalization branch. He said that a combatant officer accepts or rejects the advice of his medical officer at his own risk. His senior officer, he said, was General Ashton, and the latter is responsible to the Militia Council and through the Minister to the Cabinet. Witness said that he was not satisfied with hospital conditions in any district in this country.

Gen. Fotheringham said that the Militia Department did not have anything to do with the control of the hospital until April 1st last, it being under the control of the Military Hospitals Commission. He declared that the Commission was illegal in the sense that it did not comply with the international Geneva Convention.

Toronto Stands Alone.

Witness went on to say that there is not a place in Canada, except Toronto, where this dissatisfied state of affairs exists. Neither the newspapers or the public in other sections have adopted such an attitude. "There is no reason under God's blue canopy for the condition which exists in Toronto to-day. It is infamous," he said.

Gen. Fotheringham declared that as the Militia Department was the vulnerable spot to attack the Government in wartime, so was the Medical Department the subject of most criticism. He declared that it was cruel to make such an attack on the medical service unless there was something better to take its place.

Would be Cruel.

"Do you say it would be a cruel thing, supposing the medical services are not what they should be, that the public mind should be made acquainted with that fact?"

"I certainly do, because there are channels by which complaints can be rectified."

Gen. Fotheringham said that relatives have the same rights in securing information from military hospitals as they have in civilian institutions. When Spanish influenza became prevalent witness said that he sent out a circular to all military districts. He denied that it was necessary to go to the United States to get any information as to the treatment of the disease. Conditions when the Militia Department took over the control of hospitals indicated that the hospital situation of the country had not been carefully considered. There had never been a Consultant Board, and there had never been any attempt made to ascertain the hospital needs of each district, and when the Militia Department took over control of the hospitals that was done. It was found that in order to dispose of the men it was necessary to spend \$5,280,000 on hospital structures and sites.

At St. Andrew's College.

The Director-General explained that, to relieve the local situation, St. Andrew's College had been secured. When it is completed, which he thought would be in about ten months, it will have accommodation for 2,000 beds. Within ten days, he expected, the main college building will be ready to receive patients. It will be equipped with 265 beds. Then, too, Gen. Fotheringham said, when the Christie street hospital is completed, there will be a large number of beds available at the Dav-

ville Hospital because of the transfer of patients.

Overcrowding at Base.

In answer to a question of Mr. Greer as to why there should be 600 instead of 400 patients in the Base Hospital, witness said that the normal personnel of the institution under the civilian regime was 800, as there were about 400 attendants and an equal number of patients. At present only men are being treated in the institution, and not more than a dozen attendants sleep in the hospital. "The top story of the building has been recognized by everybody as being risky so far as fire is concerned, but there was never a patient put up there who was not able to walk out."

General Fotheringham told Coroner McCollum that he would not admit the institution had been overcrowded. The total percentage of deaths from influenza in the Base Hospital has been 3.29; the General Hospital death rate has been 12 per cent, he said. In Grace Hospital the percentage has been 11.28. While the witness agreed with the Coroner that severe cases only were treated in the General Hospital, he declared that that did not "justify an absolute perversion of the facts as to the Base Hospital. That is to say, we have had one patient die to four in the Toronto General or Grace Hospitals. I admit all you say, but don't turn upon the Base Hospital and lie about it as it has been lied about."

"A Tremendous Rush."

Col. L. E. W. Irving, A.D.M.S., since October 1, produced the statement of the number of patients treated in the Base Hospital each day during this month. The highest was 714, on October 4, and the lowest 357, on October 25. Witness said when he found congestion at the Base Hospital he arranged with Major R. O. Reddy to have some of the R.A.F. patients transferred to the University residence.

Replying to Mr. Greer, Col. Irving said "there was a tremendous rush, due to this influenza, and the hospital was full."

The total number of cases up to October 25 was 1,811, the total number of pneumonia cases has been 218, the total number of deaths 71, which is a percentage of 3.9 of the total cases. The percentage of death to the total cases of pneumonia was 32 and 4-7ths, he said. The death rate at the Hamilton Military Hospital was 32; at the Polish Camp Hospital, 32.56; at Camp Borden, 33.3; at Toronto General, 29. "Conditions at the Toronto General ought to be very much better," said Col. Irving.

"The difference between a modern hospital," asked Mr. Greer, pointedly.

"Yes."

Col. Irving said he would not accept the Base Hospital as a modern institution. He would not take it if he could get another hospital. He agreed with Mr. Greer that it was all right as an emergency institution.

Interfered With Staff.

Witness told Mr. I. S. Fairty, Assistant City Solicitor, that on taking office he found newspaper men entering his department freely, which interfered with the work of the staff. After a conference with the Officer Commanding, it was decided to have the Assistant Adjutant-General issue all information.

Colonel E. B. Hardy, D.S.O., O.C. at the Base Hospital, had complained of the same thing, and witness had advised him that all information should be given out through the A.A.G. There was nothing to prevent relatives of patients from securing information.

Dr. Clarke's Evidence.

Dr. C. K. Clarke, formerly Superintendent of the Toronto General Hospital, said that he had never heard of the statement credited to the late Dr. Bruce Smith, Inspector of Hospitals, by Dr. C. J. Hastings M.O.H., that the Base Hospital had been condemned, and that was why the new institution was erected. To the best of his knowledge, it was decided to erect the new building so as to be nearer the University and to provide ample laboratory accom-