

WORK OF DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC INFORMATION EXPLAINED IN THE COMMONS BY MR. ROWELL

Articles Disseminated Through Many Channels—Churches and Theatres Aligned Respond Readily, Giving Opportunity for the Spoken Word—Letters of Appreciation From Clergymen of All Denominations—Keeping in Touch With Similar Departments at Washington and London—Articles Translated Into French for Use in the Province of Quebec.

Special to The Star.

Ottawa, April 22.—Much interest has been evinced in the new Department of Public Information, of which Mr. M. E. Nichols is director, and the explanation of the work of the department made by Mr. Rowell in the House last Thursday. Hansard reports Mr. Rowell's remarks on the subject as follows:

Hon. N. W. Rowell: The work of the Director of Public Information, on the limited scale applicable to Canada, is similar in character to that being carried on by the Bureau of Public Information in the United States, and to the Ministry of Information in Great Britain. As the hon. members of the House are aware, in all the countries at war there are departments that deal with dissemination of information relating to the war among their own people, as well as branches of the service dealing with propaganda abroad, and the idea back of the creation of this directorship of public information in Canada was exactly the same.

If we are to sustain the spirit of the people; if through the long and trying years of this struggle we are to retain their continued interest and enthusiasm in supporting the war effort of the country, we must endeavor to supply them with the fullest possible information in connection with the conduct of the war. One of the primary objects in creating this branch of the public service was to supply fuller information to the people of Canada in reference to the progress of the war and Canada's participation in it. There has also been placed under the charge of the Director of Public Information the publication of the Canadian Daily Record for our troops overseas. This paper is edited and conducted by returned officers who have served at the front.

Sir Sam Hughes: Who is the head of this department?

Mr. Rowell: Mr. Nichols.

Sir Sam Hughes: Late of the Montreal Daily Mail?

Mr. Rowell: Yes. Capt. Wallace is in actual charge of the publication of the Daily Record.

Not the Same.

Mr. Lemieux: Not our hon. friend from West York?

Mr. Rowell: No, he is a newspaper man who has served overseas and is now back in Canada. The information is cabled over and the Daily Record is published for the information of the men in the trenches. News which would interest the men at the front is being supplied every day. I am informed that in so far as the supplying of home news is concerned, the Daily Record is recognized as being the best publication going to any of the troops overseas. The arrangements for the publication of the Daily Record and its supervision were placed under the direction of the Director of Public Information in January or February of this year. I am sure the members of the House will all agree that it is a wise thing that the men overseas should be kept in touch with what is going on in Canada, that they should have the news from Canada and that the home ties should be maintained through such a publication.

Sir Sam Hughes: How many words are sent daily?

Mr. Rowell: From 1,000 to 1,500 words of the general news of Canada are cabled daily.

Mr. Sutherland: Is this the Record from which were omitted the names of certain soldiers who were candidates in the last election?

Mr. Rowell: I have no knowledge of that matter. The supervision of the Record came under the charge of the Director of Public Information in January or February of the present year, some time after the election, and I have no knowledge of conditions prior to that time. The paper is printed in London and is despatched to the soldiers overseas. A support most of the members have seen this paper; it is a small publication of four pages. The Director of Public Information is also responsible for seeing that news which the Government receives in connection with the war and which can properly be made public reaches the press of the country.

Mr. Ross: I understand that this Record was published before January. Under whose charge was it published before that time?

Mr. Rowell: The news was being supplied by officers of the militia; I

presume under the Militia Department. It was published in London, the information being sent from Canada. In addition, the Director of Publication is responsible for seeing that news of important decisions of the Government, particularly relating to the war, reaches the public press. In the ordinary course, information as to the important acts of the Government, in the great majority of cases, is communicated direct to the press either by the Prime Minister or the Ministers in charge of the different departments. But it is the duty of the Director of Public Information to keep in touch with the various departments and to see that their important acts are communicated to the Press. One of the difficulties of all Ministers, and of departmental officers, is that there is such a pressure upon their time and attention, especially during a period of stress like this, that not sufficient attention is given to communicating to the public news of importance. The public is entitled to the fullest possible information as to what is being done by the Government, in order that it may be kept in touch with the situation. That is an important phase of the work which must be developed as time goes on.

Mr. Power: Are the advertisements which appear in the Record paid for?

Mr. Rowell: I cannot say as to that. It is published in England. All we are responsible for here is sending over the news.

Daily Record Adverts.

Mr. Power: Are you responsible for the advertisements published in it? For a period of about three weeks previous to the election, the Daily Record was plastered with advertisements asking the soldiers to vote against the friends of the Kaiser. Were these paid for, and, if so, by whom?

Mr. Rowell: The Record was not under the control of the Director of Public Information at that time, and I have no knowledge of the matters to which my hon. friend has referred.

Mr. Power: Under whose control was it?

Mr. Rowell: It was published in England.

Mr. Middlebro: May I ask the hon. gentleman (Mr. Power) if he has any objection to the advertisement to which he has referred?

Mr. Power: I have an objection to the manner in which the words were used, and I have a grave objection to pointing out the people on this side of the House as being friends of the Kaiser. I have, as well, a particular objection to the members of the Government, who were candidates at that time, treating their opponents as such.

Mr. Pedlow: Is there a complete file of that publication in the reading room of the House? If not, I think it would be wise to keep a complete file of the paper so that it would be available for reference, and so that we could check up the matters appearing in it.

Mr. Rowell: I will make inquiries as to the point about which the hon. gentleman asks. I do not know whether there is a file or not. I have no doubt there is a file in the department of the publication since it came under the charge of the Director of Public Information.

I propose now to speak of the propaganda work of the Director of Public Information. The members of the House would not expect me to go into matters of detail in connection with the question of propaganda outside our own country. Yet, I am sure, they will recognize that there are conditions under which it might be desirable that Canada's war efforts, and what we are doing in this country, should be made known outside of Canada. We are one of the allied nations and it is important that the facts in connection with our participation in the war should be kept before other peoples as well as our own. That is becoming increasingly important in connection with our relations with our neighbors to the south. This is a matter which comes under the charge of the Director of Public Information. He is in touch with the American Committee of Public Information and they are rendering help and assistance to each other. He is also in touch with the British Ministry of Information and arrangements have been made for co-operation between the British Ministry of Information and the Director of Public Information here. They are placing at our disposal much of the literature which has been published there insofar as we desire to use it in Canada. Many pamphlets, of very great value, dealing with certain war conditions in Europe have been placed at our disposal for use and distribution in Canada. That arrangement was made only recently.

War Lecture Bureau.

There is another aspect of the work of the department to which I would like to draw attention and that is what is known as the War Lecture Bureau, or what might be described as oral propaganda. I am sure we realize the invaluable service which the press of Canada has rendered during this war in placing before the people of Canada the facts in connection with the war and in sustaining the spirit of the people during the whole course of the struggle.

Mr. Edwards: Is it in recognition of the splendid services of the press of this country in stimulating recruiting that hundreds of dollars have been paid out to Le Devoir for Government advertising?

Mr. Rowell: The advertisements that have been printed in the newspaper to which my hon. friend refers do not come under the cognizance of my department, and, therefore, I cannot give my hon. friend the information he desires.

I was going on to say that we all recognize the value of the press, but nothing will fully take the place of the oral appeal, the living voice in appeal, to the people in connection with the war, and in communicating to them the facts bearing on the war. That has been one of the most important developments in the work of the Bureau of Public Information in the United States, and of the Department of Information in Great Britain. In both those countries they have organized volunteer speakers, who discuss the varying issues and phases of the war before the people in order that the whole nation may, so far as is practicable, be kept in the most vital touch, not only with the war situation, but with the ef-

forts of the nation itself in the prosecution of the war.

Mr. Lemieux: What is the personnel of the Bureau?

Mr. Rowell: It consists of a traveling secretary, who is organizing these voluntary groups or associations in the various cities and towns. The workers are all volunteers throughout the cities, towns and rural sections of Canada. There is also an official who assists in the office with the work of this bureau, as well as with the press work.

Sir Sam Hughes: What are the names of the officers who assist in the work here? I may as well confess that I am suspicious of the entire outfit.

Mr. Rowell: I cannot help my hon. friend's suspicions; I can only state the facts.

Sir Sam Hughes: I would like to get their names.

Mr. Rowell: Mr. Frank Veigh, of Toronto, is the organizing secretary of the War Lecture Bureau throughout the country, and Mr. LeSueur is associated with Mr. Nichols in the office. He assists not only in the work of the War Lecture Bureau, but also in the work for the press.

Mr. Lemieux: Is he a son of the former secretary of the Post-Office Department, the late Mr. LeSueur?

Mr. Rowell: I do not know the position of Mr. LeSueur's father, but this gentleman was identified with Y. M. C. A. work before he entered upon his present duties.

Mr. Lemieux: I think he is the son of the late Mr. LeSueur of the Post-Office Department, who died a year or so ago, and who was a member of the Royal Society of Canada.

Mr. Rowell: I cannot say as to that, I would be very glad to give my hon. friend the information if I had it.

The procedure adopted in connection with the War Lecture Bureau is to distribute a weekly bulletin containing information and material for speakers. This information goes to the clergymen of all denominations throughout Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It goes to Public school inspectors, to school teachers, and to all volunteer speakers in connection with the War Lecture Bureau's work. I understand that one hundred and fifty localities have been organized throughout Canada with speakers who undertake to give short talks, on the themes suggested for them, in moving picture shows, theatres, Canadian clubs, and societies of all sorts; the object being to reach the people in this way with the living voice through pulpit, school, theatre and club.

Sir Sam Hughes.

Sir Sam Hughes: May I ask, is this work along the same lines as that of the committee of one hundred sanctimonious gentlemen organized in Ontario as a general committee, with branches in every county in the Province? Is this work along the same lines, and is it to be utilized for political purposes?

Mr. Rowell: No, my hon. friend is quite in error. This bureau has nothing whatever to do with the committee to which he refers. Its work is just as I have explained. Perhaps I could not better define the work than by reading what President Falconer, of Toronto University, who is chairman of the advisory committee, has said. In communication which I received from him in reference to the work, he states:

"Since the beginning of December leaflets have been issued at frequent and fairly regular intervals dealing with themes which we thought would stimulate the mind of the people and give them useful information in regard to the war. These leaflets have gone to all the clergy of Canada, and to a large number of teachers.

I have already stated that in some 150 localities between the Atlantic and the Pacific, these local committees have been organized in the object of securing volunteer speakers who attend at the places which I have mentioned where they have the opportunity of addressing what they describe as really great audiences.

Sir Sam Hughes: Can they get audiences to turn out to hear this sort of stuff?

Mr. Rowell: They do apparently, surprised as the hon. gentleman may be, and apparently the audiences enjoy it; I have a great many letters to that effect. However, this is what President Falconer says:

The experience of these months has demonstrated that there is a wide field of usefulness for such work. We know that both the army at the front and the Government at home depend to a great extent upon the moral quality of the country. That quality is undoubtedly good, but under the severe strain which we are suffering at present endurance, courage and patience are needed in these critical months. The people must be informed and stimulated by telling them facts that will strengthen their resolution by keeping before them regularly the purposes of the war, by cheering them as to the accounts of its progress, or in times of darkness by buoying them up with hope, and by setting before them the plans of the Government which will contribute to the winning of the war. The hearts of the people must be kept high. Of course, the debt that is owed to the newspapers is enormous, but there is need also of the spoken utterances, of the direct appeal to the people supported and authorized by the Government. We know what President Wilson has done in the United States and that Britain has appointed a Director of Propaganda. To this there are two sides, the press and the organized public address.

Timely Comment.

President Falconer, and other men of like outstanding position in Canada, are freely giving voluntarily of their time and their ability to carry on this propaganda at home in order that the spirit of the Canadian people may be sustained clear and strong through these days of stress and struggle. In order that my hon. friend may have some idea of the weekly bulletins which are sent out, let me draw attention to the last number issued in which the subject is headed, "A Lesson from the Napoleonic Wars." If any hon. gentlemen wish to read this bulletin I shall be glad to have them furnished with copies. I venture to think they will not find anywhere a better summary of the critical situation which existed during the Napoleonic wars, and of the position which Great Britain had to face at that time, vastly more



"HELP US ENTERTAIN T

One of the street corner parties tagging to-day to receive tribute to a tion at Exhibition Camp on May 4, corner of Spadina and College. From Mearns, Miss Lawrence, Miss Marsh-

serious than that which she faces today. A message of courage and cheer such as this bulletin contains must necessarily be very helpful at the present time, and will reach thousands of people throughout Canada in a direct and effective way through the volunteer speakers of the War Lecture Bureau.

This particular article was prepared by one of the best known professors of history in Canada who is glad to give his time and ability to this work.

The work of this department commands the confidence and support of patriotic citizens all over the country, who are deeply interested in the success of Canada in the war and in sustaining the spirit of the Canadian people. My hon. friend wishes to know how it is appreciated by the clergy. All over Canada, the clergy of all denominations have expressed appreciation of these statements sent to them; giving them information in connection with the war and subjects bearing directly upon the war. I have here page after page of letters which have been received from clergymen all over Canada, expressing their appreciation of these bulletins. Among the thousands of letters, I have one from Rev. Charles E. Coughlin, of Assumption College, Sandwich, Ontario, who wrote to the Bureau the following letter:

"May I state that I am firmly convinced of the necessity of prosecuting the war with undiminished vigor. This conviction is based not only on patriotic premises but also on the religious principles which I, as a Catholic priest approve. Whenever I have an opportunity to address my fellow citizens or co-religionists, be assured that I shall endeavor to inspire them with the "Win-the-War" spirit."

We also have letters from men like Principal Dyde, of Robertson College, Edmonton, who says:

"You address willing ears. I am willing to do all in my power in pulpit and platform and will place myself at the disposal of any committee or council which is, or may be formed. This is without reserve."

If my hon. friends are interested, I have pages of extracts from letters from the foremost clergymen of all denominations from the Atlantic to the Pacific, thanking the bureau for sending them these weekly publications which they say contain valuable information. Man after man says that it should have been established before, that it helps them in presenting the facts to their congregations. Many clergymen living in out-of-the-way sections of the country, away from metropolitan centres, where the large papers do not circulate so freely, say that the information contained in these statements is of great value and that they use it Sunday after Sunday in presenting to their congregations the war situation and the demand upon our energies and resources which each day makes more urgent. I will not trouble the House with reading these communications unless my hon. friends wish to have some of their contents presented to them.

Field in Quebec.

Mr. Cannon: Are those publications translated into French and circulated also in the Province of Quebec?

Mr. Rowell: They are.

Mr. Cannon: By whom, may I ask?

Mr. Rowell: They are translated here at the office; I do not know who translates them. But all the clergymen in the Province of Quebec receive these statements, and they are translated into French for the benefit of those who speak that language. And may I say here that the department will heartily welcome the co-operation of my hon. friends from Quebec in getting these subjects, which are so cordially received in the other provinces, just as cordially received in the Province of Quebec. And if any hon. member of this House has any suggestions to make as to how the bureau can carry on its work more effectively in order to get the real facts of the war situation before all the Canadian people they will be most heartily welcomed. For I think we must all recognize that in all sections of Canada there are still some of the Canadian people who do not appreciate the real seriousness of the conflict in which we are engaged. Anything and everything the Government can do, it is its bounden duty to do, to get before the Canadian people the real issues of this war, the urgency of the present situation, and the necessity for Canada to throw her whole strength into the struggle. It is in order that we may do this more effectively that this bureau has been organized, and the limited staff, such as it is, has been created. That is, in brief, an outline of the general situation. If there is any further information hon. Gentlemen desire I shall be glad to give it.

SPR. HUSTON WOUNDED.

Spr. William John Henry Huston, a student in Arts at Victoria College of the year 1917, is reported wounded. He was attached to the Divisional Signal Corps of the Canadian Engineers. He enlisted at Forest, Ont., but his next of kin is James Huston, Manitou, Manitoba.

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