

INQUIRY IS DEMANDED INTO TORONTO RIOTS

H. H. Dewart, K.C., Representing G.W.V.A., Asks Controllers to Exercise Powers.

CRITICIZES THE POLICE

Says System Completely Broke Down During Recent Disturbances in the City.

Mr. H. H. Dewart, counsel for the Great War Veterans' Association of Canada, has written a long letter, which will be dealt with by the Board of Control, Tuesday, asking that they recommend the City Council to exercise its powers to order an inquiry into the conduct of the Toronto police force during the recent disturbances in which many war veterans and civilians were badly mauled by members of the police force.

In his letter Mr. Dewart says representations have been made to both the Dominion and Provincial Governments, but the investigation insisted upon by the G.W.V.A. had been denied. He then proceeds:

City Has the Power.

"Under the Municipal Act there is a procedure quite often used, and with which the City Council is quite familiar, by which the Council of the municipality passes a resolution requesting a judge of the County Court to investigate (among other things) any misconduct on the part of a member of the Council or an officer or a servant of the corporation, or 'to enquire into any matter connected with the good government of the municipality or the conduct of any part of its public business.' (Municipal Act, Section 248.)

"I must trespass on your attention sufficiently long to state why the G. W. V. A. is interested enough to make this application and to briefly narrate the circumstances, which in themselves would no doubt have led some member of your municipal body to take action in the same direction.

"The effect of the newspaper reports of these disturbances was to confuse in the minds of the public the actions of a few returned soldiers (whose minds as well as their bodies had been overstrained by their hardships) with the actions of the great body of returned veterans. Accordingly the G. W. V. A. convention and its executive took immediate steps to disavow all mob sympathies and to demand an investigation that would enable them to disabuse the public and to keep their own ranks free from the taint of **sedition**. It is on the instruction of the executive of this association in Canada that I make this application.

"The facts are familiar to all citizens of Toronto and unfortunately for the good name of the city have a much wider publicity.

"The citizens of Toronto pay this year nearly two mills on the dollar for the administration of justice. A large portion of this goes to the maintenance of a police force whose duty it is to protect property and person in this city.

Conduct of the Police.

"On the night of Friday, August 2nd last, this police force stood by and allowed tens of thousands of dollars worth to be wrecked. On the night of Saturday, August 3rd, this police force committed a series of apparently organized assaults on the persons of people who were lawfully using the streets of Toronto, assaulted citizens and visitors to the city, mercilessly clubbed aged men and boys in their early teens and most disgraceful of all, battered helpless and crippled soldiers with a ferocity that we had hitherto expected only from the guards of a German prison camp.

"Although the occurrences requiring investigation date back to August 2 there has been no move made by either municipal or police authorities to ascertain the facts and fix the responsibility. His Worship has stated that the Board of Police Commissioners will 'deal with all complaints that have been received' when they meet in September. He has written to me that the Police Board 'can attend to these matters without delegating them to any outside authority, and it is not their intention to delegate them to any outside authority.'

Breakdown in Police System.

"But this is quite aside from the mark. The Police Board has no powers such as the County Court judge would have under a municipal inquiry. This is not such a minor dislocation of police management as can be left to the Police Commissioners. There has been a complete breakdown, or rather inversion, of police authority and discipline. It is not a matter of special 'complaints' that have to be dealt with. The investigation we ask for should deal with the whole police system and should take into the scope of its inquiry the performance of their duties by the heads of the police force and the Police commissioners themselves.

"The citizens of Toronto are entitled to what they are paying for—a disciplined police force supported by the confidence of the people. An investigation by an impartial judge is required to bring out officially the facts, restore public confidence and bring about necessary amendments to the law. At the same time the conduct of military and municipal police—civilians and soldiers, discharged or undischarged war veterans can be fully investigated. The Great War Veterans Association of Canada wants to shield no one. It has placed itself on record in disapproval of all unlawful and riotous conduct, as it is asking to-day that responsibility be placed and apportioned and urges that its request should be granted."