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## Seditious Prisoners and Conscientious Objectors Fund

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COMRADES,—

We collected £3680/5/- during the time the world was being made safe for Democracy. For obvious reasons, no statement has been published previous to this. During times when a fellow could be arrested for saying the Lord's Prayer, it was just as well not to irritate our friends the enemy, who were in a very nervy condition. The history of the fund should now be known to all. But to place it on record, as they say in Parliament, I am issuing this statement. Bob Semple had been arrested. He was charged "That on November 26, 1916, at Wellington, he expressed a seditious intention contrary to clause 3 of the War Regulations of September 20, 1915." It was common knowledge that a list had been prepared of men to be gaoled, and that if any of these men were to dare to wink at a soldier it would be an act of sedition or would be of seditious tendency. To-day it appears like a joke, but at the time these things were taking place it was certainly no joke. So it was decided at a Conference held in Wellington on December 20, 1916, and following days, to set up a committee consisting of Messrs. Glover of "The Worker," Grayndler of the A.P.U., Bruce of the Waterside Workers' Union, McKenzie of the Grocers' Union, with myself as organising Secretary, to collect funds. A better committee I have never worked with. They met in Wellington occasionally and sent me instructions how to pay out, but they gave me an absolute free hand as how to collect. It stands to reason that I should not have been so successful with this job if it had not been for this splendid committee. £3680 takes some collecting. It must be remembered that most of this came in in small sums. Half-a-crown, three shillings, five shillings, and so on. And with each contribution came a letter that had to be replied to. The consequence was that over three thousand letters and receipts had to be sent out, and, in many instances, details of the income and expenditure had to be also sent. In most cases this was a labour of love. But in one or two cases Uncle Ted did not send "Good Thoughts at nine." One dear comrade sent a half-a-crown. He asked would I please send a receipt and a copy of receipts and expenditure up to date. I replied to the effect that to do so would cost more than 2/6, but if he would run down to Christchurch (he lived away up on the East Coast of the North Island) I would gladly submit the books to him. He replied that he would contribute no more as I had treated him shamefully. I asked would he like his half-a-dollar returned. Taking it all in all, I think the comrades right throughout the Dominion treated me grandly. They knew I

had to do this as a side line; that I was also appealing on behalf of "The Maoriland Worker." Was doing my two columns per week for that paper, and also doing my bit on the public platform. Of course I could not have done this work if it had not been for that splendid old Union, the Canterbury General Labourers, and my daughter, who ably assisted me without once grumbling. The Seditious Prisoners gave her a gold bangle and gave me a watch, for which I thank them.

Very well, Semple was gaoled, and it was resolved that his wife and family should not suffer for want of food. Before the Lyttelton Gaol gates were properly locked on Brother Semple, Fred Cooke was arrested. Then during the Conference Pat Fraser was arrested. Tom Brindle took Fraser's tea to the watch-house, and he was arrested. By this time everyone who was prominent at all in the Labour movement was expecting the little tap on the shoulder and the "comealong-withme." Personally, I am of the opinion that a lot more would have been arrested but for the fact that Harry Holland told the Hon. W. H. Herries, during a deputation sent by the Conference, "That we were quite aware of a black list that had been prepared, and that the names on that list were known to us." This caused the pannicky Cabinet to pull in a bit. To write up the history of those days in a serious way is rather hard on me, because the thing was so silly. With P. C. Webb I did a tour of the West Coast. It was really exciting because wherever we went we were followed by members of the Sherlock Holmes Union of Workers. But I believe they had a good time, and so did we. Looking back over those meetings I am bound to laugh. One good-natured, fat old "John" came to me and said, "Mr. Howard, I was instructed to take down your speech last evening, and I must say you went very close to sedition." "Great heavens," said I, "what did I say? Think of the (grass) widows and orphans that will suffer if I am put in gaol." He shook his head and said, "Well, I am giving you the warning; they are watching you very closely, and I know parts of your speech have already been sent in to the authorities." "For the love of Mike tell me what part is seditious, because I have delivered that speech so often that Pat Webb knows it off by heart, and I daren't let him speak first for fear he will say it." It appears I had been telling a joke of a boy who was sitting over one of those gratings in the side channel with a hook on the end of a piece of string hanging from the end of a stick. A rev. gentleman stands and looks at the boy for a moment, and says, "What are you doing, boy?" The boy answers, without looking up, "Fishing!" "Fishing, fishing," said the parson. "What fish do you expect to catch down there?" And the boy replied, "Snigs." "Snigs," said the parson, "what are snigs?" And the boy replied, "I don't know yet, I ain't caught any," and then I used to apply it by saying the Government was fishing for "snigs," and they would be surprised when they found out what they were going to catch. And this dear old boob said that was seditious. I can only assume the Government had a little sense of humour left, and they didn't want to get laughed at, or I should have been gathered in. Take Semple's offence as an example of the easy way a man could be gaoled. Here was the charge: "That he said at Christchurch—Then there would be no need for conscription to ask a man with home ties and responsibilities under the present set of circumstances to leave his family and this country on 6/- a day, pay a pound to the landlord and go

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to fight, and leave his offspring to starve and to depend on the cold charity of the aristocratic section of the community. It is too much to ask any man, and if you are going to ask a man to sacrifice all he has got, to desert his home and wife and walk away to fight for the country that is monopolised by rich people, why not give him some guarantee that his wife and family will get all they desire in his absence?" Returned soldiers should mark that passage and ask themselves, was not Bob fighting on their behalf? And in almost every case it will be found that the men gaoled were out fighting on behalf of the men who thought it their duty to go to the front. I cannot go into the history of those times, much as I would like to if I could afford the printing. We have got to laugh these people out of court. We have got to show the utter foolishness of the present system. We will never kill the system by taking it seriously. If we can get the people to see the silly side of the junkers we shall be able to get rid of them. So then, day after day, the gaol gates was opened to admit one or other of our good comrades. And our gaol system is so much the better for it. The warders and gaolers had been used to having the scum of the earth under their charge. And it was a change for them to have honest, upright citizens committed to their care. There are some warders, of course, that could not be improved. That is the type that are born warders. Their place is gaol, and whilst it's hard on the prisoners it cannot be helped until the breed dies out. Well, for a start, we were able to pay £2 per week to each wife and 5/- per week to each child dependent. Gradually we increased that; but at no time did anyone get more than a bare living. The maximum was made £4 per week, but only a few received the maximum. It will be noted in the statement of accounts that some got more than others, but this will be accounted for by the number of children. The single men received £25 each on release, and only in cases where a mother was dependent on them did they receive anything besides. There are one or two items that cannot be fully explained, but no money was expended except it was submitted to a committee at the Trades Hall. I trust comrades will be able to read into this what is meant without further explanation. Shall we call it comforts for the prisoners?

Mr. Glover acted as agent in Wellington and paid all accounts there, but, of course, every penny he received passed through my accounts and was acknowledged in "The Worker" weekly. In Auckland, Mr. W. Richards did the same, and on the Coast Mr. Geo. Hunter was the agent. I will give a general summary of each man's accounts and a final summary of the whole. It will be remembered that the Executive of the Miners' Union was roped in, and also Messrs. Flood, Langley and Hunter. These were able to get released after a short while, but the Rev. Mr. Chapple served his full term.

The C.O.'s.—At about the time the last of the Seditious Prisoners were being released, the first of the C.O.'s were being taken to gaol. The funds fell off very rapidly, and we were only able to pay a very small amount to these dependents. The only reason for this falling off that I can see was that there had been a considerable amount of money contributed by the comrades for other purposes, viz., two by-elections and a "Worker" sustenance fund, and second because, at the start, it was only men without children being taken, and it was generally felt that the women could work. But I can guan-

antee that most of these women, if not all, were not in a fit state to work, and that none of them could be accused of taking one penny that they were not literally forced to. In fact, the women were grand, and under very trying circumstances. We had three maternity cases, for which we paid all expenses. There is an item in this account that will need explaining. Mr. and Mrs. Price had been gaoled for sheltering their boy. Just a working-class couple, and when they were released they were right up against it, so the committee voted them £10. It will be remembered that the epidemic came on during the time our men were in gaol, and it broke out in the prison. We sought permission, and obtained it, to send comforts into the sick men at Templeton. We were also permitted to send Christmas comforts in. It will be noted in the C.O. expenditure the postage account is rather higher than in the Seditious Prisoners' account. This is accounted for by the fact that I used to send a Post Office order in a registered envelope, with a stamped, addressed envelope for reply and a stamped receipt to sign. Many of these women I never saw, and they were dealt with entirely through the post.

To sum up, I am glad this nightmare is over. I am glad that our comrades are all in their homes again. I rendered all the service I possibly could to make it easy for the women and children. I have not had these accounts audited, and I do not intend doing so unless someone demands it. I acknowledged every penny I received from week to week in "The Worker," and that was my check on the income. Everything paid out is explained in this account, and each one will be able to see their own account. The books can be seen at any reasonable time by any person who contributed to the funds. There are dozens of people I would like to thank for the way they stood by the fund, but space will not permit. But I must place on record the fact that we could not have done the things we did without the aid of "THE MAORILAND WORKER." It published all our appeals and all our receipts free. On behalf of the women and children I tender "The Worker" our sincere thanks. Anyone who has had any experience of administering funds of this character will appreciate the amount of hard work that it entails. Without the assistance of my daughter I could not have carried the job through. I am glad it is over. I trust that this statement will not be given to the press or to anyone who was not in sympathy or who did not contribute to the fund. It is a private matter between those who gave and those who received and myself.—Sincerely,

E. J. HOWARD.

## TOTAL RECEIPTS.

£3680/5/-.

## EXPENDITURE.

£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Per Mr. Glover, S.P.			T. Helson	12	10 0
W. Parker	222	7 6	J. Wesley	8	5 0
C. Edwards	9	10 0	J. Thorn	25	0 0
H. Pearch	12	0 0	S. Fournier	148	11 6
P. Fraser	96	11 0	J. Loughran	5	0 0
R. Semple	132	0 0	J. H. Jones	31	10 0
P. Campbell	3	0 0	T. Brindle	31	10 0
J. Arbuckle	13	15 0	A. Johnson	52	0 0
J. Cumming	12	10 0	Sundries	10	9 5
J. Jones	15	0 0	C.O.'s—		
J. Maloney	15	0 0	Mrs. Harding	145	3 0
A. Jordon	12	10 0	Mrs. Gould	94	16 0
R. Wintle	13	15 0			
J. H. O'Brien	13	15 0			
J. Winnard	12	10 0			
				£1148	18 5

NOTE.—There was no Committee for the C.O. Fund.

## EXPENDITURE PER G. HUNTER, RUNANGA.

	£	s.	d.
Mrs. O'Rourke	122	10	0
Mrs. O'Brien	78	0	0
Exchange	0	3	8
Expenses, concert	1	0	0
P. C. Webb, refund	12	0	0
Sundries	0	8	6

£214 2 2

Note.—The item to P. C. Webb is a refund. Mr. Webb sent me £20, but did not say what it was for. I assumed it was for the Seditious Prisoners' Fund, but found out later it was for a sick comrade at the Sanatorium. As the item appears in the income it had to appear in the expenditure in this way. The difference was a contribution from Mr. Webb to this fund.—E.J.H.

## PER MR. W. RICHARDS.

	£	s.	d.
Mrs. Noakes	20	0	0
Wires re release of Miners	0	10	0
Beds, Meals, Released Miners	9	11	0
Stamps	0	5	0

£30 6 0

Note.—The Miners' Executive was gaoled in Auckland.

## HOWARD'S EXPENDITURE S.P. FUND.

£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Mrs. Thorn, sen.	54	0 0	Mrs. Kiely	44	6 7
Mrs. H. Armstrong	167	0 0	Mrs. N. Roberts	68	5 0
Mrs. F. Cooke	135	10 0	Mrs. W. Worrall	45	4 4
Mrs. Chapple	177	9 0	Mrs. G. Samms	88	13 0
J. O'Brien	40	0 0	Mrs. V. Kelly	102	5 2
P. O'Rourke	41	0 0	Mrs. Maddren	33	0 0
R. Semple	40	0 0	Mrs. F. Robinson	64	0 0
P. Ramsay	25	0 0	Mrs. J. Walker	64	5 0
R. Williams	25	0 0	*Mrs. Duke	11	2 0
Supreme Court Appeals	12	12 0	Mrs. L. Jessup	107	8 6
Sec. Expenses to Wellington	5	0 0	Mrs. Ellman	30	0 0
Expenses re Hunter, Flood, and Langley	8	14 5	Mrs. A. C. Gadd	74	0 0
Postage and Exchange	10	0 0	Mrs. Quartermain	63	0 0
Special Item Referred to	32	18 4	Mrs. E. Hamilton	33	0 0
Printing and Stationery	10	0 0	Mrs. E. Burgess	97	7 0
Fares and Breakfasts, Lyttelton	5	0 0	Mrs. Price	10	0 0
Incidentals	7	15 0	Mrs. Henderson	48	0 0
Mrs. Burrows	67	0 0	Mrs. M. D. McDonald	15	1 9
Mrs. Harding	2	10 0	Mrs. Blackburn	5	0 0
Mrs. J. Roberts	73	0 0	Fares to Templeton	6	0 0
Mrs. H. Jordon	110	5 6	Epidemic and Christmas comforts	5	0 0
Mrs. Hayden	74	4 8	Printing	5	10 6
Mrs. M. Gavin	90	7 1	Postages and Exchange	15	0 0
			Incidentals	10	0 0
				£2259	14 10

\*Note.—The Society of Friends sent a donation for this amount, which appeared in the general receipts, and provided for Mrs. Duke for the remainder of her term.

Mrs. Maddren and Mrs. Kiely had a son each arrested. As these boys helped keep the homes going we had to assist. Mrs. Worrall, who had no children, at her request, only received a small weekly allowance. Mrs. Henderson and Mrs. McDonald only came on the funds when their own savings gave out. Mrs. Blackburn received this small amount because she was ill at Christmas time. She was the wife of a soldier in gaol at the same time as our own men.

TOTAL AMOUNT PAID TO SEDITIOUS PRISONERS OR  
DEPENDENTS.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Noakes .....	20	0	0	Cumming .....	12	10	0
Parker .....	222	7	6	J. Jones .....	15	0	0
Semple .....	172	0	0	Maloney .....	15	0	0
Armstrong .....	167	0	0	Jordon .....	12	10	0
O'Rourke .....	163	10	0	Wintle .....	13	15	0
O'Brien .....	118	0	0	Winnard .....	12	10	0
Thorn .....	79	0	0	Helson .....	12	10	0
Brindle .....	31	10	0	Wesley .....	12	10	0
Fraser .....	96	11	0	Fournier .....	148	11	6
Ramsay .....	25	0	0	Loughran .....	5	0	0
Williams .....	25	0	0	J. H. Jones .....	31	10	0
Edwards .....	9	10	0	Johnstone .....	52	0	0
Pearch .....	12	0	0	J. O'Brien .....	13	15	0
Campbell .....	3	0	0	Cooke .....	135	10	0
Arbuckle .....	13	15	0	Chapple .....	177	9	0

TOTAL RECEIPTS, £3680/5/-.

EXPENDITURE.

	£	s.	d.
Per Mr. Glover .....	1148	18	5
Per Mr. Hunter .....	214	2	2
Per Mr. W. Richards .....	30	6	0
Per Mr. E. J. Howard .....	2259	14	10
	£3653	1	5

	£	s.	d.
Total Receipts .....	3680	5	0
Total Expenditure .....	3653	1	5
Balance .....	£27	3	7

The balance (£27/3/7) will be used for printing this statement  
of accounts.

E. J. HOWARD, Hon. Secretary.

