

Issued under the Auspices of the
Irish National Aid & Volunteer Dependents'
Fund Association (Cork Branch).

TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

OFFICIAL REPORT

OF THE

Ill-Treatment of the Irish
Prisoners of War

INTERINED AT

Froggoch Internment Camp.

Printed by Patrick Corcoran, 21, Sullivan's Quay.

We assure the readers of this pamphlet that all the statements contained therein were duly verified, and we accept the full responsibility for the publication of same.

The Irish National Aid and
Volunteer Dependants' Fund
Association (Cork Branch),

*City Hall,
Cork,*

5th December, 1916.

The Truth About Frongoch.

TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

Owing to the numerous false accounts concerning the conditions and treatment of the Irish Prisoners of War in Frongoch which have been put into circulation among our people at home, it has been considered desirable to issue the following statement as a truthful synopsis of our conditions and treatment in this Camp:—

CAMP CONDITIONS.

First, with regard to the conditions under which the prisoners are housed: What is known as the "South Camp" is composed of old distillery buildings that have been lying years in disuse, and as a consequence are musty and malodorous. The grain-lofts have been turned into living rooms for the prisoners, as many as 285 prisoners having been crowded into one of them. Some of these grain-lofts do not even possess windows, and are only lighted by means of a few sky-lights. In wet weather the rain flows in copiously through the roofs, sky-lights, and along the passages. Every morning whilst these lofts are being cleaned out the prisoners have to go out into the yards irrespective of whether it is raining or not. All the buildings are swarming with rats. Many private supplies of food have been destroyed by these rodents; and one prisoner was severely injured by a rat, just under the right eye, whilst asleep. Such is the effect of sleeping in these lofts that many men have fainted on coming into the fresh air of the yard for early morning count; and the daily sick attendance at the hospital averages 42 men. The whole Camp is absolutely unfit for human habitation.

FOOD.

Secondly, with regard to the food. The Government rations supplied to us are bad in quality, and utterly inadequate in quantity. Each prisoner is allowed a meat ration of 8 ounces per day, but as all the bones, fat, suet, and waste portions of the carcass are included in this weight, the prisoner is lucky if he receives 3 ounces of meat. The meat supplied is invariably New Zealand frozen, which is always unpalatable, and on several occasions it has been condemned by the doctor as unfit for human consumption. A potato ration of 6 ounces per man per day is allowed; but those supplied to us are of a most wretched quality, and have also been condemned by the doctor. Our greatest food grievance is, perhaps, the bread ration of 24 ounces per man. It is of an unbelievable bad quality both with regard to the flour, or other substitute used, and the baking of it. Instead of attending to our complaint concerning the bread, the Commandant tried to force us to eat it by prohibiting the sale of a better quality bread in the canteen. We offered to bake the bread ourselves, but the Home Secretary would not allow this. The doctor has stated that the bread "is very bad." A milk ration of one small tin of condensed milk per 20 men per day is allowed; and many tins have been condemned by the doctor. The same remarks apply to the minor articles of diet supplied to us. One result of the lack of fresh food is the breaking out of skin disease among the prisoners. Recently the authorities began to issue a fish ration of one herring per man for dinner on Fridays; but these herrings were so badly cured that none of the prisoners could hardly eat them, and they had to be thrown in the swill tub. Eventually, we had to give up drawing these herrings; but as the authorities will grant us nothing in lieu, practically the whole of Friday's dinners have to be purchased out of the prisoners' private funds. In short, were it not for the supplies of food and money received by the prisoners from various Committees, relations, and friends, they would have died of starvation.

When the first batches of Irish Prisoners of War arrived at Frongoch from the various English Prisons they were informed by the Camp Commandant that there were two ways of running the "Interment" Camp; one way was for the prisoners to run it themselves; and the other way was for the Commandant to run it, and that his way "was at the

point of the bayonet." The prisoners, for good and sufficient reasons of their own, decided to undertake the responsibility of running the Camp, and to that end the necessary officers and subordinates were duly appointed by the prisoners. The manner in which the work and discipline of the Camp was carried out and maintained continually drew unstinted praise from the British Commandant; and he personally informed the general body of prisoners on a massed parade that he had furnished a Report to the Home Office on our good conduct, discipline, and cleanliness. To achieve this result under the conditions outlined above was no easy task, and, indeed, was only possible by the unity of the general body of prisoners, and the respect and obedience rendered by the men to the Camp Leaders.

By the end of last August the release of prisoners from here had practically ceased; and by the end of that month it was evident that the attitude of the authorities towards those prisoners whose continued internment had been recommended by the farcical Advisory Committee had undergone a complete change.

BRUTALITY.

One evidence of this change was the harnessing of a number of prisoners to a four-wheeled lorry and compelling them to drag coarse stones from the bed of an adjacent river, broken quarry stones from the local railway stations, and coal "clinkers" from the "South" to the North Camp. MR. SAMUELS HAS DENIED THIS IN PARLIAMENT, but it is nevertheless true, and visitors as well as the prisoners can prove it. This work was alleged to be essential to preparing the "North" Camp for our future habitation; and the prisoners could therefore only complain of the BRUTALITY of the nature of the work, no question of principle being involved.

Later on an effort was made by the Commandant to get the general body of prisoners to work in neighbouring quarries. A wages of 5½d. per hour was offered to them; and out of this wage the authorities proposed to deduct 3d. per hour in respect of their board and lodgings at Frougoh. The whole body of prisoners objected to this work on principle. An alternative of agricultural work was next

presented to them ; but again the prisoners refused on the same principle.

On August 31st last, the Commandant terminated the local contract for the removal of Camp refuse, and intimated that in future the prisoners would be required to do this work. As the prisoners were always willing to perform all work legitimately essential to the sanitation and cleanliness of their place of internment, they agreed to furnish a daily fatigue party of eight prisoners for the work of emptying their own ash-pit.

On September 1st the prisoners performed this work for the first time. As soon as they had finished their own work the military authorities gave the party an order to proceed to the soldiers' quarters—which are OUTSIDE our place of internment—and there to scavenge the refuse-pits of the military. The question of principle being again involved, the prisoners declined to do the work. When brought before the Commandant on the charge of refusing to do this work, he told the prisoners that in future he intended using the prisoners' labour in every way he possibly could, and that they would have to perform this or any other work he choose to set before them. During the trial the Camp Adjutant said that he would write to the Home Office for directions about the matter, and he appealed personally to the prisoners to do the work until such time as the instructions were received. As the prisoners were anxious to prove that their objection to the work was BASED ON PRINCIPLE, and did not arise from insubordination, they readily consented to do this temporary performance. The Home Office directed that the prisoners were to continue the work, and when this was communicated to them they at once struck work in respect of the military refuse-pits. The Commandant sentenced them to isolation in the "North" Camp, and deprived them of all personal property, extra food, smokes, letters, registered packets, parcels, visits and newspapers, and ordered that they be kept in this condition until such time as they gave an undertaking to obey ALL ORDERS given them. Each daily fatigue party of prisoners received this drastic punishment in rotation (Saturdays and Sundays excepted), until the total number undergoing this sentence reached 142. The Home Office then intervened and directed that the sentence be remitted, and the work to be in future performed by the soldiers.

CONSCRIPTION.

On September 5th the authorities made their first attempt to conscript one of the Irish prisoners here named Hugh Thornton. The military staff was unable to "pick out" the prisoner, and they asked one or two of the Camp Leaders to identify him; but they declined to act as "spies" upon their comrade. All the prisoners were then lined up in the outer yard and the Camp Register was called over by the Adjutant. As each prisoner's number and name was called he was required to answer, step out of the ranks, and proceed to the bottom of the yard. These orders were promptly obeyed by all the prisoners. When Thornton's name was reached, he answered, and was immediately seized and placed in cells. The Commandant then charged the whole body of prisoners with "insubordination," and ordered that all letters, registered packets, parcels, visits, and newspapers be stopped for seven days. This absolutely unjust and vindictive punishment was part of the new regime. No act of "insubordination" had been committed by any prisoner, but the incident was seized upon as a pretext for punishment for their successful rejection of the quarry, agricultural, refuse labours, as well as their refusal to act as "spies" upon one another. A letter of complaint against this punishment was sent by the Camp Leaders to the Home Secretary. He ignored the letter.

MORE BRUTALITY.

On September 11th, the Commandant sought to increase and perpetuate our punishment by ordering compulsory daily route marches on the specious plea that the prisoners were lazy and indolent. The manner and method of carrying out these marches—ordinarily a great pleasure to us—made them extremely irksome, and their frequency seriously upset our hitherto excellent domestic arrangements. Moreover, old men and others not quite capable of these marches were forced to go upon them. Because one of the prisoners, Patrick Daly, desired to stop in from one of these marches to answer a letter from his wife, he was sentenced to 168 hours cells on bread and water diet. His conditions in these cells were such that he was forced to go on hunger strike in the effort to better them, and he was left to starve for four days before the Commandant would permit the doctor to remove him to hospital. About a week after Daly's discharge from hospital it became his turn for ash-pit fatigue, and when the Commandant was sentencing him, he (Daly) complained that to deprive him of writing to his

wife and children was also punishing them, who were innocent of all wrong, and as the Commandant would not concede the point this prisoner again went on a hunger-strike as a protest against the unjustness of the punishment. This prisoner was subsequently tried by a District Court-martial and sentenced to 56 days' imprisonment. It is to be noted that THE COURT-MARTIAL INSISTED ON TRYING DALY AS A PRISONER OF WAR.

As a result of our continual complaints concerning the unhealthy and insanitary condition of the South Camp, the whole body of prisoners was transferred to the North Camp on the 21st October. The North Camp consists of a collection of wooden huts, the roofs of which leak freely in wet weather.

CONSCRIPTION AGAIN.

On October 31st three brothers named King were picked out by the military and conscripted. The Irish prisoners have a strong objection to any of their comrades being conscripted into the British Army; and measures were eventually taken whereby it was hoped that THE CONSCRIPTION OF IRISH PRISONERS OF WAR would be successfully combated.

On November 2nd the authorities desired to conscript two more prisoners named Fintan P. Murphy and Michael Murphy. The Military Sergeants were sent to find them, but could not recognise them. All the prisoners were then lined up and the Camp Register called over by the Adjutant, as in the case of Thornton; but this case had proven that the answering of names was equivalent, in effect, to helping the authorities to find the men, and in consequence the measures taken were that a large number of prisoners refused to answer to their names and numbers. As a result of this action nearly 300 of the prisoners were being marched to the South Camp, when one of the military identified Fintan Murphy, who was at once placed in cells. In the South Camp another unsuccessful attempt was made to get these prisoners to answer. The military then reviewed all the prisoners individually, and sent back to the North Camp all those of whose identity they were sure. When this process was exhausted there still remained 201 prisoners of whose identity the military were uncertain. Later on in the evening the military picked out a man whom THEY BELIEVE to be the person wanted, but whom we have reasons to believe was never out of Galway until his arrest. Both of these prisoners were sent to London under escort. Fintan Murphy's trial has been reported in the Press. With regard to the other man, whose name was

Barrett, he was only sent back to Camp on 13th inst. Those 200 prisoners were told that they would be kept in the South Camp until they answered their numbers.

HUNGER STRIKE

As part of our measures against the attempted conscription of our comrades who have offered their lives for the freedom of the small nation of Ireland, these 200 prisoners went on a hunger strike. On Saturday the 4th the Chaplain intervened and sought to get the men to give up the hunger strike. They agreed to do this only on condition that a guarantee be given that they be allowed back to the North Camp without revealing their identity, or being punished. THIS GUARANTEE WAS GIVEN, and they returned on Saturday evening. The following Monday morning all letters, registered packets, and parcels for these prisoners were stopped. The guarantee was shamelessly broken.

On Tuesday 7th, the Commandant, having returned off leave, sent for the Hut Leaders about 9.30 a.m. He informed them he had considered the events of the past few days, and decided to take no steps to punish the offenders, his reasons being that he was somewhat of opinion that the whole affair arose from the fact that the Leaders had not been strong enough in enforcing discipline. He re-stated their position and responsibilities and read out some new orders to them. The substance of them was that (1) each hut leader was responsible for having certain men, and ONLY these in his hut, (2) he was responsible for being able to say at any time where any particular man was, and (3) he was responsible for having all the men of his hut on parade for the Commandant's daily inspection. In reply to the Head Leader the Commandant stated that the Hut Leader would not be required to spy out any man UNLESS HE (THE COMMANDANT) ORDERED HIM TO DO SO. He said that if the prisoners' leaders could not run the camp with proper discipline he would have it run at the point of the bayonet; and that if the camp had to have in it only dead bodies he would have discipline in it.

The Commandant was reminded that the discipline of the camp was perfect except in matters that had a bearing on the withdrawal from the camp of men suspected of being liable for military service for England. He was told that the prisoners considered it UTTERLY UNJUSTIFIABLE for the Government to try to conscript into the ENGLISH ARMY men who belonged to THE

ARMY OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC, and who had been taken as prisoners of war: that while any such danger threatened any man in the camp the men would not remain in any such arrangement in the huts that would enable the authorities to identify such a man; and that, as Irish prisoners themselves, the Leaders could not dissociate themselves from any action of the men in the matter. The Leaders were then ordered to their huts for roll call.

In reply to the Commandant's remarks about "spying" and "dead bodies," the Head Leader said that he would prefer to be a corpse any day rather than be a spy upon his comrades.

During the above interview a large reinforcement of troops in full war kit detrained at the station and marched to the camp. Every soldier of the camp guard was by now under arms. This large force of military was marched into the prisoners' compound. Three soldiers with fixed bayonets and loaded rifles were posted outside the door of each hut; and the balance not so distributed drawn up in massed formation at the bottom of camp. An officer then passed along each line of huts and distinctly issued the order to the soldiers: "If any man attempts to leave his hut bayonet him at once." It was evident that the Commandant had made every preparation for putting his threat of "having nothing but dead bodies in the camp" into practical operation. But the prisoners refused to be frightened by these threats or display of brute force, and determined to combat the conscription in every possible way. No less than 342 prisoners declined to answer their numbers or reveal their identity. They were marched to the South Camp under strong escort. Those who revealed their identity did so for good and sufficient reasons. It is desirable that both camps should, under the circumstances, be occupied. These prisoners were purposely herded into three worst grain lofts, the two best being kept locked up. They are deprived of all letters, parcels, visits, papers, and access to the canteen. The Commandant has tried in every way to create ill-feeling between the two camps; but he has failed lamentably. Three of the prisoners who were out on the passage after lights out have been placed in malodorous cells, and sentenced to be kept there "until such time as they remember their numbers."

On Friday, the 10th inst., 15 prisoners, who were former Hut Leaders in the North Camp, were picked out and charged with "refusing to answer their numbers and names on Nov. 7th and influencing the men to a like refusal." The Commandant remanded them for trial by a District Court-martial.

The question of influence has never arisen amongst us. The objection of the prisoners here to the attempted conscription of their comrades is a genuinely spontaneous one. The Government knows from experience that under the circumstances these men will not fight for England, and their insistence is due to a vindictive desire to wreak vengeance on them. We believe that our action is not only killing the attempt to conscript our comrades here, but that we are helping materially to kill the proposals to extend the Military Service Act to Ireland, and we look to the people of Ireland to help us in our fight for the right of one small nation.

THE PARTY.

We would ask the people of Ireland not to place too much credence on the reports of persons released from here, whose period of internment does not enable them to speak with authority on the present state of affairs in Frongoch; any more than we believe the absurd stories that "the Party" is interesting itself in our release, an official member of which was on the farcical Advisory Committee which recommended our continued internment. Our treatment in this camp is neither humane nor Christian, and the Government and "the Party" are equally cognisant of the facts.

Irish Prisoners of War,
Internment Camp,
Frongoch,
14th November, 1916.

SIGNED BY 360 MEN.

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various committees of the Board of Directors of the Bank of Montreal, for the year ending 31st December 1885.

The Board of Directors has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the report of the various committees, and to express its appreciation of the services rendered by them.

The names of the members of the committees are as follows:

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John P. ...
 James ...
 ...
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