

Why \$35,000,000 For Y. M. C. A. War Work

By JOHN R. MOTT

General Sec'y. National War Work Council of the Y. M. C. A.

The National War Work Council of the Young Men's Christian Associations at the recent meeting in the Bankers' Club in New York, a meeting attended by a remarkable body of foremost laymen and citizens from all parts of America, unanimously recommended the raising of a fund of \$35,000,000 to serve the men of the armies and navies of the United States and certain of her allies, such as Russia, France and Italy, as well as the prisoners of war throughout the war zones, for the period ending June 30th, 1918. The spirit of high patriotism, the dictates of soundest military strategy and business judgment, and the principles and spirit of Christ Himself combined to influence this significant action. The reasons which led these men of large vision and of proved wisdom and capacity to decide that this sum be secured are for reasons which should prompt everyone who reads these lines to do all in his power to insure the success of the undertaking by sacrificial gift, by constant advocacy, and by earnest work to enlist the co-operation of others.

Thirty-five million is needed because of the vast number of men to be served. Before next July the American Army and Navy will in all probability include 2,500,000 men.

The National War Work Council is also called upon to extend its work throughout the Russian army of over 7,000,000 men, the French army of about 4,000,000 men, the Italian army of some 3,000,000 and the smaller armies of Belgium, Mesopotamia, India, East Africa, Egypt and Roumania, numbering possibly 1,500,000 more. Moreover, the 6,000,000 prisoners of war imperatively require the continued practical ministry of America through the Association.

Here, then, are a total of 24,000,000 men, whose physical, intellectual and spiritual betterment we wish to promote. When we remember that in no previous war have more than 2,000,000 men opposed each other and that here are twelve times that number to whom we have a mission, the colossal magnitude of the undertaking is apparent.

We believe in securing the \$35,000,000 because there could be no more economical or important use of funds. It means an expenditure of \$1.50 per man. This statement is in a sense misleading, because it is proposed to spend the disproportionate sum of nearly \$10 on each American enlisted man. Ten dollars, however, is a very small amount to devote to the welfare of an American soldier or sailor, especially when we consider the range of the needs which are to be met, the variety of the means to be employed, and above all, when we reflect on the dangers and possibilities of the lives of these men, the character of the service they are rendering, the supreme sacrifice every man of them stands ready to make.

The burning question, which each of us by our attitude toward this fund must help answer, is, shall the flower of our American manhood, who go out to represent us, come back to us (so far as their lives are to be spared) with bodies shot through, with unnamable disease, and with character weakened or blasted, or shall they return stronger and better men? What more important asset have we to conserve?

To fulfil our obligation to our allies we should raise this fund of \$35,000,000. As the past three years have unfolded, it has become increasingly clear to the American people and their leaders that in a very true sense the allies have been fighting, not only for themselves but for us also.

In entering the war we have made their cause our cause; their defeat would be our defeat. Anything which strengthens their hands will hasten the victorious ending of the struggle.

The military and civil leaders of certain of our allies have made it clear that there is no one way in which America can help their cause more than by placing at the disposal of their entire armies the practical and constructive agencies of the Young Men's Christian Association.

This call has come with convincing force from Russia, France and Italy.

Trusted military representatives of our own country, such as Major General Hugh Scott, Late Chief of Staff, and General Pershing, have strongly endorsed these appeals. There are no two answers to such appeals. The response must be favorable, prompt and generous.

The \$35,000,000 should be given because of the direct and vital bearing which the work of the Association has in accomplishing the purpose of the war.

Napoleon has said that in war morale is to other factors as three to one. Each day the warring countries are spending over \$130,000,000 to supply what might be called the material factors and forces. This budget calls for devoting less than one-third of that sum among over one-half of the soldiers of the war, and this not in one day, but in nine months.

America wisely and generously subscribed over \$120,000,000 to the Red Cross in response to the first appeal. This work of the Association calling for less than one-third of that amount, ministers not only, like the Red Cross, to the physical comfort of the enlisted men and of the military prisoners, but also to their intellectual and spiritual nature, in other words, to their morale.

Senator Root the other day emphasized the fact that there is something about modern trench warfare which affects profoundly and adversely the morale and spirit of the men. A work like that of the Association, therefore, with its recreational sports, its entertainments, its lectures and libraries, its social intercourse and service, and its spiritual appeal, meets a most real and pressing need.

Take Russia as one illustration. If through this practical means we can help to hold the Russian army in being during the coming winter and to promote its contentment and to strengthen its discipline and morale, it will have a vital bearing on winning and shortening the war.

It means that occupying of the eastern front (and therefore not on the western and southern fronts) of over 150 divisions of German and Austro-Hungarian troops. Anyone can see that this has a vital bearing on America and the other allies—Vital is the right word to use.

The sum of \$35,000,000 spent in carrying out the Association program in the military and prisoner-of-war camps will accomplish untold spiritual results. It would be difficult to overstate the extensive and the intensive need of such work or its boundless possibilities for good. In the American army the Church functions locally, as it were, through the Association, just as through the chaplains and through the pastors in neighboring parishes it functions clerically.

In armies like the Russian, French, Italian and Indian, owing to the understanding with the authorities, the Association does not conduct any religious or political propaganda, but it has a marvelous opportunity to release its spirit and to illustrate applied Christianity.

In all history there has not been a greater opportunity to serve men as Christ served men than the one presented by these tens of millions of men under arms and in prison camps. Now they are concentrated in trenches, in reserve camps; in time of peace they will be scattered and will be comparatively inaccessible in hundreds of thousands of cities, towns, and villages.

The experience of Canada and Australia should convince anyone who may be at all skeptical that the \$35,000,000 not only should be raised, but that it can be raised. If friends of this work in America give on the scale that the Canadians have given during the last eighteen months for the support of the Association in the Canadian army, they will give during the next nine months for such service in the American Army and Navy and in the armies of our allies at least \$36,000,000, or if we give on the scale that the people of Australia gave during the last eighteen months we will give for the next nine months \$57,000,000.

It should be remembered that in

these two countries the money was used for such work in their own armies only, whereas in case of our \$35,000,000 fund the armies of several of our allies are to be served and also the 6,000,000 prisoners of war, as well as our own army and navy. What has been done in lands which have been paying the staggering price of war for over three years can be done in America, with its far larger unspent resources.

Faith in the desirability and practicability of securing this fund of \$35,000,000 grows, as well as the burning desire and quiet determination to work with all our power to get it, when each one lets his mind and heart dwell on some one young man who is to receive the benefits thus made possible by the associated gifts and sacrifices of rich and poor. Let him think of that member of his own immediate family, or that relative, or that friend, or that neighbor, or that member of the same society or church or business or profession. Then let him picture the monotony, the hardships, and the moral and physical dangers to be experienced. Let him remind himself of reasons and issues which have sent forth his friend or associate or neighbor at the call of the nation.

Above all, let him remember vividly the man's devotion even unto death, as he thus lets his memory and imagination play, does he not come to the conclusion that the very least he can do is to do all in his power toward providing the \$35,000,000 needed?

It is the Christ-like thing to do. Louder than the call of patriotism, clearer than the dictates of strategy, more appealing than the claims of our allies, more communicative and compelling than the sacrificial example of the lives of the men who go forth to fight for us and our cause—is the example and the sovereign word of our Lord and Master, he said "unto whomsoever much has been given of him shall much be required." Surely he has given us much—yes, all. Of Himself he could say, that "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

May the spirit of the sacrificial God who "spared not His own Son but freely delivered Him up for us all" move upon our Associations and the friends of the enlisted men everywhere and impel them to a great and expansive sacrifice of money and life.

There is an element of urgency about this great undertaking which should not be overlooked. Some tasks can wait; not this one. Many good causes will be with us year after year, but thank God, not this one. The coming autumn, winter and spring months will be the most critical period of the war for most of the armies and for the prisoners of war, owing to the prolonged strain (as it has been for so many millions of the men) and owing to conditions of economic exhaustion, social unrest, and depression of spirit which obtains in parts of the war zones.

This work, therefore, takes additional significance, and it becomes us to do quickly and with prodigal hand what we do. No true patriot, no true Christian, this momentous year, has anything more important to do for all that makes life worth living for himself and for those to come after him than to insure the full success of this \$35,000,000 campaign.

Homesickness is one of the things that the Y. M. C. A. has to combat among the soldiers. Boys who have never been away from home before, thrown into strange surroundings, their little world turned topsy turvy, find themselves lonesome and heart-sick. They turn to the Y. M. C. A. for friendship and they find it. It is the nearest thing to home that they come in contact with. If this help was the only thing that the Y. M. C. A. accomplished it would be worth the price that it costs, but the Y. M. C. A. is one of the strongest factors making for a better morale in the army.

It furnishes the men with entertainment, amusement, a place to read and write. It furnishes writing paper and envelopes free of charge and helps them in their physical, moral, mental and spiritual development. It is their club, a place where they are always welcome. To continue this work and extend it among the armies of Russia, France and Italy, to serve the American troops at home and abroad. The National War Work Council of the Y. M. C. A. is raising the sum of \$35,000,000. The drive will be conducted from November 11 to 19. Every one is asked to contribute. The money is used to make the soldier boy happier and more contented in his army life. It is all for him. Every cent is used for his welfare.

Out near the front line trenches where the men are dying by hundreds, where enemy suffocating gases are loosed, where bursting shrapnel constantly menaces, Harry Lauder, famed Scotch singer, who lost his only son in the war, is singing his heart out to the fighting men.

Charles W. Whitehair, a Y. M. C. A. secretary who has just returned from the war front in Flanders says that he saw Harry Lauder singing to soldiers lined about the sides of a great shell crater.



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He had sung 500 times in seven days and his voice was very hoarse. He was warned to take better care of himself.

"Whatever I have to give," said he, "I am willing to give these boys. If they want to hear me sing I will sing until I have no voice or breath left." And that is just what he is doing at the very front. He is cheering the

men in a manner that is leading to fresh victories.

Lauder sings to thousands of men in Y. M. C. A. huts. He goes from one to another all along the front line. Sometimes he sings in dug-outs, at other times in shell craters. He is one of the most earnest supporters of the Y. M. C. A. movement. He has cancelled engagements to the sol-

diers. He is doing with his voice what the people of this country are expected to do with their dollars. He is making the soldiers happier and more contented and thereby strengthening the morale of the armies. This is the work the Y. M. C. A. is doing and it needs immediately \$35,000,000 to continue and extend its influence at home and abroad.