

June 28, 1918

Mr. Douglas C. McMurtrie,
311 Fourth Ave.,
New York City.

My dear Mr. McMurtrie;

I have your letter of the 22nd, taking exception to a statement credited to me, which you have seen in the daily press. As I have not seen the statement to which you refer, I of course do not know whether I was correctly quoted or not.

As to the point which you raise, whether or no the soldier who has been so crippled in the service that he is not able to carry on, after his recovery, his old profession or trade, should be re-educated for a new profession or trade under civilian or military direction; I have no question in my mind about the wisdom of that reeducation being conducted under military direction.

My reasons for this are, first, a person, so crippled or battered that he must make an entire change in the activity by which he has supported himself, almost invariably faces his position with depression and lack of confidence in his own power to win a new place. I am convinced that history of every war will show that troops of disabled men, released from military discipline are thrown out into their respective communities and never again take hold. They must have some authority and stimulus outside of themselves to force them into a new kind of productive living. After these men are dismissed from the army as soon as they are physically able to leave, I do not believe more than one in a hundred will take advantage of civilian offers of reeducation. They will naturally go back to their homes, where a false sympathy will start them in dependence and inactivity.

I believe thoroughly that the same power which put them into the army, which has asked them to sacrifice limb, health, power to carry on their old occupation, should supply the will and ambition that it has partially destroyed, and should see to it that they are restored, so far as it is possible to do so, to self supporting occupations.

You argue that if these men remain under army discipline, the regular army officer will be required to do the reeducating and for various reasons will not be fit for it, that the civilians especially trained would not be respected or obeyed by the men. Civilians are being used at present in hundreds of capacities by the Army. Doctors and nurses are civilians, who are obeyed by soldiers. They will have to do most of this reeducational work. I am perfectly willing to grant that there will be difficulties and failures, but I don't think they will compare in number to the failures that would be had in restoring the men if they were thrown out in communities with the choice of whether or not they reeducate themselves. So I make myself

clear?

D. G. McMurtrie; - page 2

You understand, I hope, that I am speaking not as a member of this Committee, but purely as a private individual. I have no authority to speak for the committee, for this question has not yet come before them.

I have been meaning to ask the privilege of going over your institution at 311 Fourth Avenue. Perhaps you will let me come there and talk the matter over with you a little further.

Sincerely,

CHAIRMAN: NEWS DEPARTMENT.

INT:EB