

# NINETY YEARS AGO: THE GLOBE'S GREAT HUMANITARIAN CRUSADE

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**Aram Adjemian**, Ottawa, Canada, 7 February 2010

✘ *Aram Adjemian received his MA in History from Montréal's Concordia University in 2007. His thesis, Canada's Moral Mandate for Armenia: Sparking Humanitarian and Political Interest, 1880 to 1923, explores the long-standing social and political involvement of Canadians in the fate of the Armenian people and uncovers details regarding the interest of Canadians to undertake the Armenian Mandate which had been slated for the United States in 1920. He currently works as an Assistant to Senator Serge Joyal.*

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### **Canadians react vigorously**

*The Globe* provided a highlighted box and larger than normal script on its front page every day during the first few months of its campaign. Several more columns provided information on the specific efforts of Canadians at home and abroad, on the totals collected, and to acknowledge the

thousands of contributors and their donations. *The Globe* also signaled its own commitment with an opening contribution of \$1,000.



Donations flooded in from across the country, and stories eliciting the most sympathy were highlighted daily. Seven-year-old Franklin R. Campbell and his two younger sisters sent sixty cents, and the handwritten note sent with the donation was reproduced in full on page one of January 21, 1920. An 83-year-old who could hardly support herself sent her only disposable income, her Christmas gift of 80 cents. A Canadian Pacific railway worker sent his entire paycheck of \$33. Another woman who scrubbed floors pledged all she could from her earnings, \$1 a month. Girls and boys clubs from across Canada also raised money at any given occasion, such as "box socials," hockey games, and even on Valentine's Day. The Women's Patriotic League of Drumbo, Ontario, made the difficult decision to pledge the money it had originally set aside to erect a monument dedicated to fallen Canadian soldiers, ultimately deciding to help the living. Meanwhile, the Dundas Women's Patriotic League donated \$947, the proceeds of its Victory Bond.



Dozens of Ontario newspapers, such as the *Peterborough Examiner*, the *Lindsay Post*, the *Kitchener Daily Examiner* and the *Kingston Whig*, launched their own campaigns, forwarding the proceeds to *The Globe*. Municipal councils small and large and churches of various denominations from across the country did the same. Impressively, Sunday schools across Canada organized an "Armenian Day" on April 11, 1920, hoping to raise enough money for each school to care for an Armenian orphan for one month, about \$150,000 in total.

The deplorable situation of the Armenians clearly touched a sympathetic chord with *The Globe's* editorial board. About 500 news items regarding the Armenians appeared that year, whether in the form of fundraising activities, articles, letters to the editor, poems, editorials, comments or church announcements. Armenians were often referred to as the "Christian Brethren" of Canadians; Canada as Armenia's "Big Brother." Three poems about the plight of the Armenians by J.W. Bengough, a prominent Canadian political cartoonist, editor, publisher, author, entertainer and poet, were published on December 24 1919, January 12 and March 8, 1920.

Stories of Canadians in the field were published regularly. Emma Wood from Sarnia "heard the call" and signed up to serve with Canadians in the area. Nurse Christine MacLean from Pine Grove related the heartrending tragedies of women and children she witnessed in 1919 while in the province of Sivas. The personal experiences, opinions or pleas of many others were also recounted, including eye-witness accounts by Canadian soldiers Captain J.M. Fisher of Sarnia and Lieutenant O.D.A. Stevenson of Toronto, Rev. J. R. Trumpeter from Queensboro who had traveled there, relief worker Elizabeth Thom of London, and missionaries Miss Girling-Clark of Toronto and Margaret MacLennan of Kempt Road, Nova Scotia.

### ***The Globe's* campaign saved thousands**

James L. Barton, Chairman of the American Near East Relief (NER), the largest relief organisation in the area, stated on February 5, 1920 that he knew of no charity more worthy than that of *The Globe*. He also hoped that *The Globe's* outstanding example would inspire American newspapers to follow suit. His comments are striking, considering the United States' vast monetary commitments at the time in Armenia. Several weeks later, the General Secretary of the NER Charles V. Vickery stated, "We have never known any philanthropic campaign to be conducted through a newspaper as successfully as this one in *The Globe*." Former British Ambassador to the US and well-known author and jurist, Lord Viscount Bryce, was one of several eminent persons who sent their hearty congratulations to *The Globe*.

The money was wired to three Canadian missionary doctors stationed in the field for distribution. William N. Chambers of Woodstock, Frederick MacCallum of Kingston, and James P. McNaughton of Glengarry County, all graduates of Queen's University, had been working among the Armenians since the late 19th century. They periodically relayed reports on how the money was being spent throughout the campaign.

On a personal note, *The Globe's* 1920 campaign affects me directly. The infusion of Canadian funds was specifically credited with restoring aid to the distant relief outpost of Sivas, a hard- to- reach area in the Anatolian heartland, which had been slated for closure due to a lack of funds. Since both of my maternal grandparents are originally from Sivas and almost certainly benefited from the relief provided by the NER that year, the timely aid provided through "The Call from Armenia" may well have saved their lives, among so many others.

### **The Canadian Hospital**

As the campaign began to wind down, specific projects undertaken with the Canadian contributions were listed on November 12, 1920. Tens of thousands of dollars had been devoted to providing additional care in several orphanages. A considerable sum was used to purchase seed wheat and oxen, which yielded a considerable harvest of grain that year. Other funds were used to teach trades to 5- 15- year- old Armenians to help them become self-sufficient. Significantly, another \$50,000 portion was used to construct a hospital for tubercular Armenian children in Constantinople which doubled as an orphanage. The building was dubbed the "Canadian Hospital" and was inaugurated on Canada (Dominion) Day, 1920; in addition, a picture was published in *The Globe* on December 30, 1920. NER Secretary Vickrey stated that day that the lives of 500,000 Armenians were saved that year by the unexpected response of *The Globe* and similar efforts.



*The Globe's* success in this matter was a remarkable event, particularly considering that rapid inflation and the increased cost of living had become one of the Canadian government's most persistent and difficult problems after mid-1919. Moreover, such records provide an invaluable repository of the Canadian attitudes regarding the plight of the Armenians at the time and one of the

earliest and best coordinated international aid efforts undertaken by Canadians. Ninety years on, this newspaper can be proud of the accomplishments of its predecessor in saving the lives of so many destitute people in 1920, an experience which also laid the groundwork for international humanitarian aid efforts undertaken by Canadians during the decades that followed.

***Aram Adjemian's previous contribution to Keghart.com***

[Canada's Moral Mandate for Armenia: Sparking Humanitarian and Political Interest, 1880-1923](#)

