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Letter to Major Gilbert M. Elliott from Brig. Gen. George McL. Presson regarding doctors sent to Halifax

George McL. Presson

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December 21, 1917.

Maj. G. M. Elliott,
Maine Medical Corps,
Halifax, N.S.

My dear Major:

I am very sure from your telegram to Mr. Hart that you felt rather uneasy in regard to your telegram and letters forwarded to this office. The letter referred to was not received until yesterday morning although upon receipt of the telegram I began asking for doctors. Started for Portland and got in touch with Dr. Thayer, Dean of the Medical School and after 14 hours he was unable to locate a single man. In the meantime I took this matter up with President Spaulding of the Maine Medical Association and he felt very sure he could find some one but after 24 hours gave up in disgust. So I was left high and dry. No doubt the reason for many of the doctors now refusing is that the excitement has blown over. Yet probably when you return there will be a number who will say they would have gone and been perfectly willing to had they only known. Unfortunately I am not acquainted with every doctor in the State of Maine.

At last I was able to get two doctors at Waterville, Drs. Poulin and Gousse but they did not want to start till Monday, Sunday night at the earliest. However after considerable persuasion I am able to say they will leave Saturday night. I found a doctor in Rockland, Dr. Bradford, who has been commissioned in the Army but does not expect to be called for several weeks and as he has given up his practice is very anxious to serve and I am trying to get him to leave tonight. He is an eye, ear and throat specialist but says he would be very glad to do general work, in fact do anything. Dr. Thayer informs me that the young doctors throughout the State are either so actively engaged in practice or interned in hospitals where they are very short of help that it is impossible to get them.

Am just this minute in receipt of a phone message from Dr. Bradford who says he will start tonight. I have advised him to take along some instruments as possibly he may have to do some enucleation.

The people of Maine feel mighty proud of this Maine medical unit and from reports received they have a good right to. The Governor thinks you have certainly done a great work and appreciates it. I have taken up with the Governor and Council the matter of a \$25000 appropriation for a field hospital. They seem very favorable and the Governor was very much impressed with the idea. We have run astump among some of the medical men in the State, which I will explain to you later but think we can

overcome it. Bradbury was here yesterday and went before the Governor, also Dr. Harris. We are receiving indorsements from the leading doctors but there are others trying to organize personal units throughout the State and while I hope they are sincere in their movements yet if their theories are carried out the whole project will amount to very little. You know I always believed in centralization of power.

Upon my return from Halifax I immediately called up all the families of the doctors as I suggested. Since my return have been speaking nearly every night in the interest of the 3rd Maine and also talking about our experiences in Halifax. People receive this with enthusiasm. It seems to be the only thing that wakes them up enough to create an applause. At Dexter I mentioned the name of good old fat Dr. Murphy and the people arose in their seats and cheered.

Shall be mighty glad to see you for there are many matters I want to take up, especially this field hospital movement. Think we should commence an active campaign at once. I believe the objections being made by some doctors can be swept aside very easily.

As stated before I'm mighty sorry was unable to start doctors before but it seemed impossible to get any one earlier.

Hoping you are well and that I shall see you soon, I remain,

Yours sincerely,