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Get Tough Stay Tough: Shaping the Canadian Corps 1914-1918 (Wolverhampton Military Studies)

Kenneth Radley

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At a time when many books about the Great War of 1914-1918 are largely reiterations of earlier strictly chronological accounts, wherein not much is new except perhaps the author's style, it is refreshing, even exciting, when a book offering new vistas comes along. Such a book is this one. Like the author's earlier "We Lead Others Follow", originality shines through in this present book, the work reflecting wide and thorough research, sound analysis, first-class and engaging writing (the book is not without humor) and a fascinating rendering of the temper of Canadian and British fighting men of the time.

Readers should keep in mind that the attitudes, belief, opinions and prejudices expressed herein are those of the officers and men of 1914-18. It is their view of the world that is being reported. Obviously much has changed since 1918, but certain basic aspects of soldiering and war remain. Comparisons are left to the reader, but any judgments should reflect the fact that fighting men of that time, now a century in the past, lived and breathed the reality of that world called the Western Front.

"Get Tough Stay Tough" is exceptionally well-documented, employing a wide range of archival records, published material, personal accounts of officers and men, training and other manuals, divisional and unit histories and war diaries. The bibliography includes almost 300 books and nearly as many journal articles. While the extent of research is obvious in the text, readers who pay attention to the endnotes will also see there the depth of research that enabled such an innovative account of themes virtually untouched in other histories.

This book rigorously analyses some of the elements that made the Canadian Corps effective and formidable. The approach taken tracks discipline and morale as these were conceived and established within the corps and then details their respective application and development and their influence and impact upon fighting performance. The sequencing could be described as two sets of four chapters, the first set analyzing discipline and the second analyzing morale, the whole portraying their impact and influence on operational performance. Then two chapters examine the officer-Other Rank relationship within the corps, the first defining roles and functions and the second reflecting upon the developing state of the relationship. Throughout, the critical element of leadership is superimposed.

The primary focus is the infantry, which bore the brunt of the fighting, with particular emphasis on junior officers and ordinary soldiers, these being the men most closely engaged and the men who endured and suffered the most. The place of higher command and staff is not neglected, nor are the artillery and engineers and the supporting services that maintained the corps in the field. In short, "Get Tough, Stay Tough" provides a unique perspective and a valuable assessment of the complex elements that contributed to the development and performance of a great fighting corps.

REVIEWS

“It is rare that a book imparts upon the reader a comprehensive overview of leadership, command, supervision and motivation in a way that remains interesting and engaging while being concurrently deeply

educational and thought provoking. Radley has accomplished this and more in his work on the creation and development of the Canadian Corps during the First World War … His observations and discussions are thoughtful and insightful." Canadian Military History Journal

" … This extremely well-documented book, its content, quality of production and price, make it essential reading for anyone who claims to take the study of the Great War seriously … Get Tough Stay Tough is a highly significant contribution to Commonwealth military history. It would be difficult to offer greater praise." Stand To! The Journal of the Western Front Association

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