

# **If Ye Break Faith**

**Produced by:  
H. Clifford Chadderton**

**For:  
The War Amps of Canada**

**Duration: 26 minutes, 50 seconds**

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## ***If Ye Break Faith***

**War is not heroics, nor is it pride  
It's a shame to lose all those previous lives  
Life is too short; we could love for so long  
Where's the Glory?  
*NEVER AGAIN!***

### **H.C. Chadderton:**

I'm Cliff Chadderton, the Chief Executive Officer of The War Amputations of Canada. The War Amps organization has made this film series, ***NEVER AGAIN!***, to convey an important message to Canadian families, that war is a bloody, senseless massacre and must be outlawed forever.

Cemeteries like this; they exist throughout the world and are grim reminders of the cost to society of war. Filmmakers, historians - all too often they glamorize war. This misleads the younger generation and gives them a very distorted view of what war is all about.

In this four-part series, we want to change that perspective. As war veterans who have seen firsthand the horrors of war, we realize we must down play the glorification of mankind fighting each other. We want to remind people that war is the most dehumanizing experience which man has ever invented. We will show you scenes from the land battles of World War I and World War II. It's very brutal footage, and some of it has never been seen before. We think it will shock you.

But this series is not about war. It's about what happens to people as the direct result of war. It's about the young men who lie under these headstones, who had never had an opportunity to live their lives. It's about human suffering, tragedy. It's about mothers who never knew their sons. It's about fathers who never had the privilege of guiding their boys through life. It's about widows who lived the rest of their lives alone. That's why we say, ***NEVER AGAIN!***

This is the cross of sacrifice. The inscription reads:

*"To the honoured memory of those sailors, soldiers and airmen who gave their lives for their country during two World Wars."*

This segment of our series deals with World War I. In a four-year span, believe it or not, more than 10 million servicemen were killed. Nearly 70,000 of these were Canadians. Many more were wounded. The War Amps was formed to help those who lost a limb or limbs during that terrible struggle.

World War I was known as “The war to end all wars.” But it's sad to contemplate that the world did not learn that one lesson, that those young men buried in these battlefields wanted us to learn, NEVER AGAIN!

The year was 1914. The world was poised on the brink of disaster. The great powers were running high with national pride and ambition, making the times ripe for war. One incident provided the excuse to ignite the flames of destruction.

On June 28th, 1914, in the Balkan city of Sarajevo, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, was assassinated by a Serbian nationalist.

Austria declared war on Serbia and the world came apart. Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy joined forces against France, Russia, and Great Britain. Once Britain was at war, Canada was at war too.

Like Great Britain, Canada faced the prospect of war with light-hearted optimism and enthusiasm. It was thought that war would be exciting; and besides, the boys would be home by Christmas.

With only a small army and navy, Canada was ill prepared to enter a world conflict. Yet, thousands of young Canadians with no training whatsoever rushed to join the war effort. They looked forward to a chance to prove their manhood, to simulating battles, to great victories.

Within a few weeks the first contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and a contingent from the then separate Newfoundland, headed to England in the largest convoy ever to cross the Atlantic.

In England, the young Canadians endured a long, miserable winter in the mud and drizzle of Salisbury Plain. In the spring of 1915, they felt ready for frontline battle. The new soldiers were wild with enthusiasm. At last, they would see action!

Little did the world know that four years of death and destruction lay ahead in a war revolutionized by high explosive shells, rapid-firing machine guns, poison gas, submarines, tanks and airplanes. Nor did they know that it would destroy virtually a whole generation of young men.

The first division of the Canadian Expeditionary Force landed in France. They moved east towards the Ypres Salient. On the evening of April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1915, the Canadians took over a section of frontline trenches near that historic bit of ground.

The next afternoon, the Germans tried to break the stalemate by introducing gas warfare. Here, suffering the hellish torture of gas, breathing through mud-soaked handkerchiefs, the Canadians held on until reinforcements arrived.

A few members of The War Amps who survived World War I, gathered together to celebrate their 90<sup>th</sup> birthdays. For them, the horror of war still haunts them. John Wood recalls his experience as a 20-year-old soldier during the battle of Ypres.

**John Wood:**

So we were in what was called “support trench.” And it was getting pretty hot, so I went up to the frontline to get away from the shells you see. And the Sergeant-Major says, “You get back where you belong.” So I did, and in a couple of hours we got hit, and the rest of the platoon, out of 13, 11 got killed.

It was a big shell, and of course, they couldn't take us out until night. So I got gangrene; so that was it.

**H.C. Chadderton:**

During one 48-hour battle, 6,035 Canadians, one man in every three were lost from Canada's tiny force of hastily trained civilians. The fighting in Ypres dragged on for months. Canada's soldiers were inexperienced. Many were wounded before they had a chance to do any fighting. War Amps member Tom Suthons was injured at Ypres in 1916.

**Tom Suthons:**

They saw me, and they put my hand on my back, to find out, to help me get through this little turn. A machine gun opened up and took the hand right off part of the arm. All that was left when I raised it up, I can always remember my hand was dangling down here, with the skin hanging onto it.

**H.C. Chadderton:**

The young Canadian soldiers learned very quickly that war was far from glamorous or exciting. It was hell on earth and there was worse still to come.

The year of 1916, was the Battle of the Somme. It was here that the concept of trench warfare was seen at its worst. As attacking troops advanced shoulder to shoulder over the shell-torn ground and tangled barbed wire of no man's land, they were cut down by machine gun fire in the first advance, falling in tragic, ordered ranks.

Men went over the top of the trenches in thousands, in a vain attempt to gain some ground for the Allies. Their only chance of survival was speed, but these soldiers were weighed down with 66 pounds of equipment. Most could only run a few yards before they joined their dead comrades, who had gone before them.

Henry Reid recalls how he stayed behind the trench as a machine gunner and was wounded in the place they called "Death Valley."

**Henry Reid:**

We'd gone in with a machine gun supporting the battle and we got through all of the battle without anyone getting wounded and we set our machine gun up, and there was a truce. I'm standing there with a machine gun and all the boys had gone looking for something to eat up and down the trench, when a "whiz bang" went off, and I turned, and a piece of the shell struck me right in the large muscle here, and smashed it all to pieces.

**H.C. Chadderton:**

The frontline on the Somme was nothing but drainage ditch – a large cesspool where soldiers suffered from "trench foot," colds and influenza. Lice infested their hair and clothing. Rats swarmed everywhere, spreading disease.

It was during this battle that the new engine of war, the armoured tank, was introduced. These large machines gave soldiers a feeling of being invincible, that nothing could strike them down. But the tanks proved to be vulnerable, and most were quickly knocked out. The men inside were often burned alive.

When the smoke from the Battle of the Somme had finally lifted, a sea of dead soldiers remained to mark the few miles of rain-soaked land they had won. More than a million and a quarter men, Allied and German, died, were wounded or captured, went missing, or went mad, during those five horrible months along the Somme.

**I triumph still if thou abide with me,  
Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes;  
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.  
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;  
In life, in death, Oh Lord, abide with me.**

**H.C. Chadderton:**

Twenty miles north of the Somme, lay Vimy Ridge. Few had ever heard of it until April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1917. German troops had occupied the area since the war began, and British and French armies died trying to evict them. Canadian forces were called in to take the ridge once and for all.

Finally, the Canadians succeeded in their task and the capture of Vimy Ridge has gone down in history as a “great achievement” a “real victory.” History must record, however, that 3,600 men were murdered in order that three miles of land could be gained.

Perhaps the greatest nightmare for Canadians in this despicable war was the Battle of Passchendaele. That was October of 1917.

Heavy rains had poured down on the French countryside. The land had turned into a treacherous swamp. Canadian General Arthur Currie had inspected the muddy battlefield beforehand and protested that the British plan to launch an assault here, would result in heavy losses. He was overruled, and was forced to send his boys to slaughter.

For five days, British and Canadian troops stood waist deep in mud, exposed to fierce German shelling as they attempted an assault on Passchendaele. It was a disaster by any measurement. Soldiers disappeared by the hundreds in a sea of mud. So did guns, tanks and horses.

For Fred Holm, the memories of Passchendaele are still vivid.

**Fred Holm:**

Went up to Passchendaele. Passchendaele was a dirty hole; mud, water. There were no trenches, just a dump. With that, there was a hell of an explosive, a real bombshell. Killed 29 and wounded nine. I was one of them, the lucky ones.

**H.C. Chadderton:**

The capture of Passchendaele cost the allies 16,000 casualties. Almost four fifths of those young men who were sent into that ill fated battle, died.

Ypres, the Somme, Vimy, Passchendaele. These are the well-known battles of World War I. But there were countless other massacres spread over the 1,564 days, of what is ironically called the “Great War.” Massacres that took the lives of so many young people – people who came from practically every country in the world.

No matter where they were from, or on what side they were fighting, these men and women suffered terribly from harsh conditions, disease and injury. But perhaps the most tragic of all, very few knew what they were fighting for. But sooner or later, they all found out one significant fact. In a war, everyone is a loser.

**Henry Reid:** All I knew is that we were in a war and that our country had called us, and we joined up and thought we were doing the right thing. I suppose we would have done the same thing today if a call like that came. But looking back at it, it doesn't seem to make much sense with all the people that got killed and all we gained from it. In fact, instead of gaining, I think we lost a lot of our young people.

**H.C. Chadderton:** "Douglas M. Lord, Royal Australian Air Force. Beloved son of G.W. and E. Lord, Melbourne, Australia. Our Darling Boy Sleeping."

"Sergeant Charles J. Ward, 38th Battalion. Gone but not Forgotten."

"William H. Gresley."

And here, the war dead are speaking to us. The inscription reads, "Do not break faith. We made the sacrifice. Preserve an honourable peace."

In that beautiful Canadian poem, "In Flanders Fields," there is a very significant line. It says, "If ye break faith with us who die..." Those who gave their lives had every reason to expect that the world would learn that lesson, but how quickly we forgot. Twenty years later, we were at it again. In the rest of this series, you will see how yet another generation of servicemen marched to their deaths.

And now the world seems to be teetering on still another world conflict. Surely we must listen to the cries of those who lost their lives in World War I and in World War II. They were trying to tell us, **NEVER AGAIN!**

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow  
Loved, and were loved,  
and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.