

# Mayor Morris and the Journal

Quite a sensation has been caused in Pembroke this week by the publication in the Ottawa Journal on Tuesday of a lengthy interview said to have been given to a representative of that paper by Mayor Morris, and which casts serious suspicions on many of our German residents and alleges that the town is the centre of an organized spy system the machinations of which are being carried on all over Canada.

The Mayor has been out of town since Tuesday morning and The Observer was informed last evening that he is not expected to return before Saturday, hence we have been unable to secure from him any information regarding the alleged interview, and in the absence of confirmation from him as to its correctness it would be unfair to pass judgment upon it. Very frequently young newspaper men who get hold of something which savors of the sensational will use extravagant language in their treatment of an interview and it is quite possible that the Mayor has been made to say many things which his words were not intended to convey. It is of course known that he holds strong opinions on some matters connected with the war, and that he has not hesitated on many occasions to find fault with politicians whom he claimed were pandering to the German element for the sake of votes, but it is the general belief that some of the statements attributed to him in the interview have at least been extravagantly enlarged upon.

It is a fact known to all that some residents of German extraction have at times since the outbreak of the war given expression to sentiments and opinions of a nature calculated to arouse the antipathy of loyal citizens whose patriotism is stirred now as it has never been stirred before, and which, if made in Germany under similar circumstances by anyone of British extraction, would most probably merit for the person guilty a volley from a military firing squad. There has at times been much indignation caused by such indiscretions on the part of people who are generally believed to be sympathetic with the Teutonic cause, and no action has been taken to intern or in any way punish those who are believed to be openly unfriendly to the Empire, and this fact is as gall and wormwood not only to the Mayor but to many others whose anxiety for the Empire's cause is deep and sincere.

That there is being operated from Pembroke a spy system which embraces the whole country seems rather a far-fetched statement and one which it is difficult to believe. We understand that complaints made at different times to the authorities at Ottawa have been investigated and that nothing has been discovered which would lead to such a conclusion, and so far as this section is concerned there is little that could be secured which would be of any military value to the German authorities. The only information which could be sent from Petawawa camp is that the prisoners interned there are being decently treated and are enjoying life, and that the Russian authorities are using a portion of the camp for the purpose of testing shells.

The interview makes the Mayor say that he does not wish to create the impression that all our German residents are bad citizens, and this is well, for no sane man would desire to cast aspersions on all of them, and particularly those of Canadian birth, all of whom we believe are loyal and true to the cause of the Empire. They know and appreciate the value of British liberty and British institutions and it would be sheer folly for them to wish to exchange the heritage they enjoy here for the oppressions and disabilities in the land of their forefathers. One of the clergymen referred to in the interview has a son fighting in the trenches in France, and on him at all events the suspicion of disloyalty can hardly be justly placed.

This is a time of course when all men are more or less sensitive, and a matter of this kind is a very delicate one to deal with. So many rumors are heard and so many speculative remarks that it is not easy to form any definite opinions one way or another, and there is always danger of doing injustice to people who may be innocent of doing any wrong or of anything in the nature of disloyalty. At the same time it is but natural that people should be skept-

tical regarding anything German at this time and residents of German birth or extraction should be very guarded in their acts and utterances lest they do or say anything which might place them in a wrong light or bring those of their fellows who are conscientiously endeavoring to maintain a proper attitude under a cloud of suspicion. Canada is at war—just as much at war as any of the nations involved—and in war times the sensibilities of any section of the people are not likely to receive very much consideration if anything occurs to arouse suspicion against them. We are not going to indulge in any washy sentimentality regarding our German fellow citizens. We fancy they are intelligent enough to understand that no one would wish to do any injustice to people who have for so long a time had a large and important part in the business and social life of Pembroke and district, but if any among them assume an attitude hostile to the country at this time they should be dealt with as alien enemies and the authorities should have no hesitation in invoking the law, quite irrespective of any political or other considerations.

So far, while as above stated some statements have been made by Germans that have caused much indignation and tended to cast a certain amount of suspicion upon the German people as a whole, no facts have been brought to light proving that any hostile act has been committed in this section of the country or that spies are operating here. If anyone has any direct evidence that would establish such facts, this information should be made known and the guilty parties punished.

So far as The Observer is concerned we rather regret the fact that the name of Pembroke has been blazoned forth on the authority of the Mayor as a centre of a German system of espionage. Whether the Mayor made the statement or not matters little now. The Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal papers have featured the story and it has spread broadcast. We are really under the impression that Mayor Morris in discussing the matter with the reporter was not talking for publication, and that he must have been surprised when he saw the story in print.

Last night's Journal followed up the matter and made suggestions for the clearing up of local rumors and suspicions, in justice to the large number of German residents who have remained true to the land of their adoption. It quotes Postmaster W. A. Moffat as having stated that local Germans have been advised to take their money out of the banks, with particular reference to the post-office savings department, and that there have been heavy withdrawals, both here and in Eganville and other places. There may be truth in this statement, but after all it proves nothing, and the theory that it is going over to the United States by underground railway for transmission abroad, as suggested by the Journal, is rather too "fishy" to receive much credence. It might easily be sent to the States by bank orders or in other ways, but we fancy our German friends, if they have withdrawn their savings, are keeping them for themselves and not sending their money for the assistance of a cause that must be quite as obnoxious to nearly all of them as to those of British birth, for while most of them have a natural regard for the Fatherland they detest the system of Prussian militarism which made it uninhabitable for them, and which is now seeking to over-run Europe.

While the Journal's articles have many things which have been common talk in Pembroke for months past, there are features which are somewhat unfortunate and which must tend to cast discredit upon well-meaning, loyal Germans, and this is regrettable. Pembroke people have hitherto done no worrying about our German citizens as a whole. Their loyalty has not been questioned. A few have been unwise and indiscreet, but we must not condemn all for the few, and it is extremely doubtful if publicity of this kind will do much good. Action by the proper authorities on any occasion when action is called for would be much more effective, and would not tend to set one element of the people against the other, as articles such as those published by the Journal are very likely to do.