

THE SITUATION IN CANADA

The country has not become excited over the resignation of Sir Thomas Tait as Director of Recruiting. There is no doubt that Sir Thomas is held in general respect and it is unfortunate that differences between himself and the Government should have developed. The disagreement, however, was over a very minor question. It was adjusted when an explanation was made of what the Government had the right to regard as a serious grievance. It is not necessary to denounce Sir Thomas Tait or to do other than feel regret that he has abandoned the work to which he had set himself with patriotism and devotion.

Fortunately Mr. Bennett has qualifications for the position which was made vacant equal to any that Sir Thomas possessed. He is a powerful and eloquent speaker. He has genius for organization. He has adequate courage and energy. He has much independence of character also, as his course in Parliament has demonstrated. No time has been lost through Sir Thomas Tait's resignation, nor has the necessary organization for recruiting and production been delayed.

Naturally the whole disposition of the Government's opponents is to overlook all that has been accomplished, to find only defects and weaknesses and to produce irritation and unrest. The truth is that we have gone as fast in recruiting as agricultural and industrial conditions would permit. After all, in the English Provinces there are not many shirkers or slackers. It is a mistake to assume that every man who is not in khaki has repudiated his obligation to defend Canada and the Empire. Day by day and week by week enlistment has increased until we have an army of nearly 400,000.

No doubt more men can be released from the fields and factories and more women can be employed. On the farms, however, there is not much outdoor work that can be done by women. We know that farm labor was desperately scarce when the war began. In the factories there is room for more women, and perhaps if we had seen at the beginning how many battalions it was necessary to recruit, a better industrial organization would have been effected. But many manufacturers were reluctant to undertake the manufacture of munitions. Many were and still are reluctant to employ women. Moreover, when all is said, the voluntary system has grave defects and weaknesses. On the other hand no responsible public man, thinking of the configuration of the country and all the elements which compose its population, has ventured to advocate conscription. We would do badly for ourselves and badly for the Empire if we added civil war in Canada to a war in Europe.

There is much more to be said than can be said in the open. There are reasons for the course of the Government, which we believe to be unassailable. We have to consider peace at home as well as strength abroad, and it is curious that we so freely accept the conclusion that Canada is the one country in which German emissaries are not busy and in which German money is not expended in the hope that a situation can be developed which will force Canadians to give much more attention to their own security. After all does not some credit belong to a Government which has organized an army of nearly 400,000 in a country where the most extreme militarist, when war broke out, would not have believed that half the number could have been put into uniform?

When Great Britain went to the assistance of France did any of us in Canada think that we would have to draw practically all our recruits from an English-speaking population of perhaps 4,000,000? We are easily impressed by the strength of German influence in the United States, but we forget that in a population of 7,500,000 we have nearly 700,000 Germans and Austrians, and at least 3,500,000 people who do not speak the English language or have settled in the country during the last ten or twelve years. Great Britain hesitates to attempt conscription in Ireland. Can any sane public man in Canada ignore the facts of our domestic situation? It is not a question of saving or destroying a Government but of what is best for the Dominion and the Empire.