

A DANGEROUS AGITATION

There has been nothing more unwise or dangerous in British political history than the attempt to deprive Great Britain and the Allies of nickel necessary for the construction of ships and the manufacture of munitions. One is appalled at the irresponsibility of the demagogues who are engaged in this movement. It is peculiarly distressing that Mr. N. W. Rowell, who was acquiring a reputation for steadiness and responsibility, should have been overcome by the noisy and busy sensationalists who are behind this agitation. Surely he is not so weak as to fear that he will be dislodged from the Liberal leadership by the managers of an agitation which is disloyal in effect if not in purpose.

It is all the more remarkable that Mr. Rowell should lend himself to this movement when he knows that the situation at Sudbury was the creation of Governments of which he was the pliant and faithful supporter. It is hard to say just how and where German secret agents do their work. Doubtless they have many unconscious tools in this country. Possibly they have some trusted subsidized agents. It is certain that if the agitation which Mr. Kemp so vigorously denounced can succeed a tremendous advantage will accrue to Germany, the war will be prolonged, and ultimate victory for the Allies may become very uncertain.

What are the facts? When the war began nickel for the manufacture of munitions in the United States and in Canada, as also for Great Britain and France and Russia, had to be obtained from the International Nickel Company. This company had its headquarters in a neutral country, and therefore to exercise any satisfactory control over its operations was exceedingly difficult. On the other hand, if export of Canadian nickel were prohibited the metal would not be available for munitions. The stocks in store, under the irritation of such action by Canada, would doubtless be sold to German instead of British agents, the British Empire alike for war on sea and land would be seriously disabled, and victory for free institutions set far in the future or made absolutely impossible.

It will occur to anyone who is capable of thinking that without the co-operation of an industry situated in a neutral country the British and Canadian Governments would be in a hard position to exercise any authority over its business. There would always be danger of international complications through violation of neutrality which might have grave and far-reaching consequences. Nowhere else, be it remembered, could nickel for Great Britain and the Allies be obtained. In our state of unpreparation when war began a great and continuous supply of the metal was essential if we were to resist Germany with any hope of ultimate success. To have made a quarrel between Great Britain and the company or to have provoked action at Washington in favor of equal treatment by the company of all belligerent powers would have been an immense triumph for the Central Empires.

Doubtless this has been the hope of the agents of Germany from the beginning. Doubtless they have devoted much time and much energy to this desperate intrigue. Manifestly there is much that cannot be disclosed. All one can say is that from the first Canada has acted in absolute co-operation with the Imperial authorities. The arrangements made for control of Canadian nickel have been satisfactory to the Admiralty and continuously effective. When all the facts can be laid before the people those who are assailing the British and Canadian Governments over the distribution of nickel will be revealed perhaps as the irresponsible and unconscious, but certainly as the deadly enemies of Canada, of Great Britain and the Allies. We repeat that there is immense danger in the foolish and smacking agitation in which Mr. Rowell and his associates have become involved. And when all is said these attacks are not so much attacks upon the Canadian Government as upon the Imperial authorities, who have laid down the policy which Canada has pursued.