

# Rather Die Than Slay, So Mennonites Will Not Fight

*Under Conscription They Would Dig Trenches, or Drive Horses or Motors, But Would Not Bear Arms—Two in Toronto Have Enlisted.*

Rev. J. N. Kitching, pastor of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ, whose mission rooms are located at No. 189 Brunswick avenue, in commenting upon the barring out at Windsor of 10 Mennonite workers from the United States, declared that the men who had been deported were "old-line" Mennonites, and that his church was an off-shoot of the parent organization. The ten who were deported intended holding revival meetings in Huron County, but on learning that they were opposed to recruiting the Canadian immigration officials had them deported. While the views of Mr. Kitching's congregation differ from the parent organization in many respects, they are the same with regard to going to war—strongly opposed to it.

Of medium height, sallow complexion, and scholarly appearance, Mr. Kitching who has but recently arrived from Kitchener, Ont., explained to The Star to-day the position of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ with regard to enlisting and fighting for the Empire.

## Rather Die Than Fight.

"We would sooner die—sooner give our life blood—than take the life of a fellow-man," said Mr. Kitching. "It is not because any of our organization, which has 84 members in Toronto, are pro-German, but because we are opposed to taking life. We are a non-resistant people, and we would be joyous at the destruction of our goods; we would pray for our enemies rather than take up arms and kill them. It is against our belief to kill."

"And what will happen to your organization in the event of conscription going into effect?" asked The Star.

"In the first place the law says that Mennonites cannot be forced to take up arms," said Mr. Kitching. "This measure was passed during the reign of Queen Victoria. Sir Sam Hughes, former Minister of Militia, in an address delivered at Kitchener some weeks ago, confirmed this. But should that law not be lived up to and we were forced to go to war, we would dig trenches, drive teams, but we would not kill anybody."

"And in the event of Germany winning the war and Canada becoming a German possession, what effect would it have on the Mennonites?" asked The Star.

"We would be very sorry but we would have to bow to the inevitable."

"Have any of your members enlisted?" enquired the reporter.

"Yes. We have two young men in our congregation who attend services in khaki."

"What is your attitude toward them?"

"While we are opposed to the taking of human life we have not said anything to these men. We have taken no voice in the matter. We are opposed to our members enlisting, but we have not endeavored to stop them. One of our ministers enlisted recently and sat through our conference in uniform. It was not right, but nothing was said to him. He is still a Mennonite and was not expelled for his action. We work for the Red Cross and give of our money to charity as far as our conscience will allow us, and we would be ready to nurse and take care of the wounded. I feel, however, that I would cheerfully give my life before going out to slay a fellow-man."

Mr. Kitching wished it distinctly understood that the reason the Mennonites were opposed to enlisting was because of the belief of the religion, and that it was not actuated by any sympathy with the Germans.

## Story of the Sect.

The Mennonites came into being about 200 years ago, and were founded by a monk in Holland. After considerable persecution the sect moved to Switzerland, where persecution was again experienced. Then Great Britain offered them liberty and the practice of their own faith if they would settle in Pennsylvania. At the time of the American revolution and the forming of the United States the Mennonites remained loyal to Britain and emigrated to Waterloo County.

Some 45 years ago two of the ministers believed there was too much form and too little sincerity about the parent body and started evening prayer meetings and a Sunday School class. For this action they were expelled from the parent body. This action brought about the birth of the present organization, the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. This body pays no attention to any particular or distinctive dress, and they hold prayer meeting and have Sunday Schools.

"What particular form do your meetings take?" asked The Star. "Are there any unusual demonstrations?"

"No," said Mr. Kitching, "our meetings are much like the Methodists." Kitchener, he said, was probably the strongest Mennonite section in Canada. At present the church there has some 200 members, and, from this congregation several have gone to the front.