

THE HYPHENATES TAKE UP A WHOLE DAY IN COMMONS

And Debate Illustrated How Easy it is to Talk in Generalities and How Different to Deal With Realities.

By The Journal's Parliamentary Correspondent.

AFTER yesterday's seven-hour discussion of the alien labor problem, nobody had much regret that it was the last private members' day of the session. From three o'clock in the afternoon until well on to midnight, member after member came on and on in a dreary procession of the dullest kind of speeches, all telling the government that it ought to do something with aliens, but none telling it just what it ought to do. In truth it is doubtful if any Government anywhere ever before got so much advice that was so barren of constructive suggestion and so burdened with confused and impracticable thinking. Of course, there were exceptions which prove the rule; Mr. DAVIS, of Neepawa; Mr. Mackie, of Edmonton; and Dr. Whidden, of Brandon, contributed intelligence to the discussion; and Mr. Nicholson, of Algoma, showed some understanding of his subject; but, in the main, the debate illustrated more than anything else how easy it is to talk and discuss and criticize and indulge in generalities without getting down to brass tacks; what a vast difference there is between the man who merely shouts criticism and advice from the bleachers and the man who has to actually tackle the hard realities and problems of the day.

Practically every one of the score of speakers who took part in the debate agreed that aliens should be conscripted and made to labor at a fixed rate of pay. Their idea appeared to be that employers of aliens should pay the regular market price of labor, but that the alien should receive only a fraction of it, the balance to be paid into some kind of a fund for the benefit of the

state or for some war purpose. Some did not appear to be quite clear as to just for what purpose they desired to have aliens conscripted. Some spoke as if under the impression that at present all aliens are unemployed. Some seemed to have got aliens of enemy countries hopelessly confused with aliens of neutral countries. Others gave figures of aliens in the country that were obviously absurd. One or two made speeches plainly intended to embarrass.

The result of this combined wealth of advice and poverty of practical suggestion was that when the Government came to present its case, Hon. C. J. Doherty, the Minister of Justice, had little difficulty in knocking the contentions of the Government's critics, or advisers, into the proverbial socked hat. The Minister's case appears so clear and convincing, that it is worth quoting:

"When the war broke out, we told these enemy aliens that they could stay here and that they would not be molested so long as they obeyed the law. According to international law civilian alien enemies may be interned but they must not be punished. Nor can they be compelled to work. In Great Britain enemy aliens are not compelled to work, but they may volunteer to work. Even then they may quit whenever they feel like it and ask to be sent back to the internment camp. Canada has received protests from Germany against German citizens in this country being compelled to work and we were able to reply truthfully that no German—citizen in Canada was compelled to work. If Canada attempted to conscript alien enemy civilians in this country with a view to making them work for the Government, it would mean that Germany would take reprisals, and not

only Canadian soldiers, but soldiers from all parts of the British Empire would be badly treated in German prison camps. It has been said here today that it would be impossible for Germany to give Canadian soldiers worse treatment than they are now receiving. It is difficult to agree with that contention in view of the reports we have received through United States consuls, before the United States went into the war, that, on the whole, Canadian soldiers who are now in German prison camps are receiving fairly good treatment."