

THE TREATMENT OF ALIENS.

The problem of the treatment of aliens would be simplified if it were a Canadian question alone. To the nationals of enemy countries we are under no obligation except that we cannot let them starve, nor can we compel them to work without remuneration. The subjects of Allied and neutral countries have rights guaranteed to them by international law which can be abrogated or modified only by mutual consent. Before the war our doors were open to the people of all European countries. They came with the assurance of the protection of the laws of this country and the laws of nations. Many of them have neglected or refused to become naturalized. Do not many Canadians in foreign countries cling to their Canadian citizenship?

The growth of war industries, stimulating the demand for labor at a time when hundreds of thousands of our own sons were going overseas, was an opportunity for the aliens, who have been making the high wages now current, and spending less for living, and investing less in war loans, than the Canadians or the British-born. Returned soldiers have been risking their lives and losing their limbs, and getting less money than aliens in Canada of military age who offer to fight neither for Canada nor their own country. Naturally the soldiers, struggling to get a footing again in civilian life, under physical disabilities incurred in their country's service, are exasperated by the contrast. There is, of course, another side to the case. Canadian employers have been glad to get labor of any kind, and without the labor of aliens the volume of production in Canada, even of war essentials, would probably have been much less. So long as Canadian labor was not displaced the employment of aliens was not without advantage to the country. With thousands of men returning from the front it is important to know whether their opportunities for re-entering the ranks of industry are lessened by the number of aliens at work. In any event it would not be unjust to put a tax on the earnings of enemy aliens, a policy recommended by the Labor party of Canada. As to Allied aliens, even if their labor were lost they should come within the scope of the Military Service Act in Canada or be subjected to the military laws of their own countries. Neutral aliens who are militarily eligible should either serve in the Canadian forces or be deported to their own countries. But the Canadian Government would create difficulties for Canada and Great Britain and invite reprisals if it undertook to deal in this manner with aliens without consulting the nations of which they are subjects.

The Government has been discussing the question with other countries, and it is probable that agreements will soon be reached with European Allies similar to the treaty between Canada and the United States. The Government is bound to await the outcome of these negotiations. If neutral countries will not listen to reason the Canadian Government must consider whether it will be justified in conscripting or deporting neutral aliens of military age. The National Registration will yield information as to the number, occupations, and ages of all aliens, and will be valuable in framing an alien policy. Canadians who try to force the issue by taking the law into their own hands are retarding a settlement and creating new problems. Abuses exist and must be remedied, but the remedy will not be found in lawlessness or violence.