

It Can Be Done Yet, If Necessary

Col. Lochead is having trouble in Berlin, Ont., in raising his battalion for the front. Not only are recruits few and far between, but the officers and men of the force are conscious of a current of hostility towards them and the purposes they have in view. Col. Lochead complains of only a section of the people of Berlin. Many of the best citizens, of German blood, are with him and quite a lot of the men who have enlisted in his battalion are Canadians of German descent. But there are these others, and they are numerous.

The people of Berlin, Ont., who are of German descent, and many of them who are German born, cannot be expected to show the same enthusiasm in the war as the rest of us do. But they can be expected to recognize the fact that they live in Canada and that Canada is at war with Germany. Those of them that are Canadians could, under the Militia Act, be called out to-morrow to bear arms in the war. Those of them who are not Canadians could be placed in detention camps at any time under an order-in-Council, passed October 28, 1914. All of them should appreciate the fact that were they under German rule they would have been disposed of in one or other of these ways long ere this.

An order-in-Council was passed by the Government of Canada on October 28, 1914, providing for the registration within one month of all persons of alien enemy nationality resident in Canada. An official statement was issued fully outlining the purposes and objects of the action taken. "In enacting it," the statement said, "the Government quite realizes that there is a very large proportion of these residents who are perfectly peaceable citizens and in no sense a source

of danger to the country." But there were others, and so it was enacted that:

"In different cities, towns, and other places throughout the country where persons of alien enemy nationality may be found in considerable groups, regular offices shall be established and registrars appointed. It is made the duty of all persons coming within the category of those of enemy nationality to report themselves to such officers, within a month after the proclamation of the creation of the office in the city or place in which, or in the neighborhood of which, such persons may reside."

Berlin, Ont., has been pretty well used by the rest of Canada throughout this affair. The fact was generally recognized that Berlin could scarcely be expected to share the war ardors of the rest of the country. But courtesy was carried further than that.

If persons of alien enemy nationality could be looked for anywhere in Canada they could be looked for in Berlin and Waterloo. But they were not looked for there. It appears that the order-in-Council of October 28, 1914, has never been applied in Berlin or Waterloo County.

Was it a mistaken kindness to exempt them from it?

No proclamation was made in Berlin, Ont., as it was made in Toronto and elsewhere; no office was established there, no registrar of aliens was appointed there. Where persons of alien enemy nationality were few they were rounded up. Where they were numerous they went unheeded.

This was the result of political influence exerted on and by both political parties. The German-speaking public of town and county is large and influential and these people did not want to be vexed, and politicians did not want to vex them needlessly. And it would be all right—everything would be all right; Besides, it seems that many prominent citizens had been very negligent about taking out naturalization papers, and it would have been extremely awkward had a registrar of aliens started in and made the discovery that quite a few prominent citizens were not Canadians at all and had never been.

So it was deemed best not to put the order-in-Council into effect there at all. But was it best? No alien enemies were interned; none were deported; none were required to report to an officer, as they are doing elsewhere. Not only so, but the exemption Berlin and Waterloo County enjoys in this matter makes that district the safest place in Canada for an alien enemy to head for. He can talk his own language and always find somebody to listen to him.

Perhaps the present trouble in Berlin goes to show that it was a mistake to exempt the place from the operations of that order-in-Council. There may be men there who need to be rounded up with a sharp jerk and made aware of the fact that they are in a British country whose hospitality they will not be permitted to abuse.