

# NO COMPULSION OF THE ALIENS

## Government Reviews Situation and Labor's Stand on the Question

*Canadian Press Despatch*  
Ottawa, Ont., Feb. 17 -- The Government has issued the following statement regarding the many proposals and demands that during recent months have been made upon it to the effect that **aliens** and **alien enemies** resident in Canada should be conscripted for industrial and agricultural purposes or that they should be compelled to work for soldiers' pay.

"Throughout the conferences it was clearly demonstrated that conscripted **alien** labor could not be utilized on farms except in cases where the conscripts could work in large numbers under military discipline. To withdraw any large numbers of laborers from the existing supply of labor for this purpose would not relieve the situation but rather aggravate it.

### Organized Labor's View.

"The attitude of organized labor was made perfectly clear--namely, unqualified opposition to any proposals for industrial conscription of either **aliens** or British citizens. They maintained that any attempt to conscript **alien enemies** with a view of relieving existing labor conditions would but intensify the situation and make more difficult the problem that now confronts the nation. They pointed out that in Great Britain where the labor problem is much more serious than here, the authorities have refrained from any such action, mainly on account of the international complications that might arise therefrom and also because of the belief that compulsion for industrial purposes is unwise and undemocratic.

**Alien** enemies in Canada are of

two classes, those who are interned and those who are permitted to remain at large. The former class comprises about two thousand persons who for adequate reasons have forfeited their liberty. These persons under the terms of a Dominion order in council of June 26, 1915, are, though civilians, recognized as prisoners of war.

"According to international usage civilians interned as prisoners of war are held to be immune from compulsory labor. This has been the policy of both the British and Canadian Governments since the outbreak of the war. Labor performed by prisoners in Canadian concentration camps is voluntary and men thus employed receive a moderate remuneration for their work.

### Those Who Have Immunity.

"The second class of **enemy** aliens comprises the unnaturalized natives of **enemy** countries whose conduct has justified the Government in according to them the liberty enjoyed by ordinary citizens. By a proclamation of the Government issued on August 15, 1914, such persons receive the assurance that so long

as they quietly pursue their ordinary vocations they will enjoy the protection of the law and will not be molested unless there is reasonable ground to believe they are guilty of hostile acts. In practice and theory this immunity is, of course, purely conditional and may be withdrawn whenever the public interest so requires. But even if this assurance had not been given, it would be impossible to find justification in The Hague convention or in general international usage for industrial conscription of such **aliens**. Moreover, special conscription of **enemy** **aliens** might be followed by reprisals in Germany and Austria-Hungary, where the shortage of labor presents a more pressing problem than it does here. Such reprisals would be visited in all probability not only upon Canadians but indiscriminately upon British citizens from all parts of the Empire.

"If it is impracticable at present to adopt a special policy of compulsory service towards **alien enemies** it is obvious that there would be even greater difficulty in discriminating against other **aliens** in Canada in respect of their employment in industry; and the Government under existing circumstances deems it unwise to embark upon such a policy.

### Must be no Idlers.

"The imperative and pressing needs of the country urgently demand that there shall be no idlers in Canada during the remainder of the war. Holy Writ declares that if a man will not work, neither shall he eat. Those who deliberately and wantonly obstruct the national purpose by subordinating everything to indolent self-enjoyment and selfish indulgence may confidently anticipate that the authority vested in the Government and Parliament will be used for compelling them to take the part which every true citizen should freely and voluntarily fulfill. But the exercise of such power must be of general application."