

THE SOLDIERS' GRIEVANCES.

To the Editor of The Globe: The letter appearing in your columns to-day signed by J. W. Bengough suggests two real grievances which the Canadian soldier may have as an underlying cause of the recent rioting in this city. The second one, which I wish to discuss, has received much attention for the past four years from one end of Canada to the other. He says:

"That whereas they (the returned soldiers) risked life and limb (and in many cases lost the latter) in hard service in the trenches for a pittance of \$1.10 per day, they return to find foreigners—in many cases alien enemies—making all kinds of money in the munition plants and other employment."

This statement is quite correct so far as it goes, but is unfair because incomplete. The soldier upon his return finds also Canadians at home in comfort and safety in various capacities, earning in some cases many times what is necessary as a living wage. It is notable that over 200,000 men coming under class one of the M. S. A. have obtained exemption, according to figures published in April of this year. These are presumably Canadians, and not foreigners.

I mention this, not to suggest that the resentment felt against foreigners should be directed against wealthy stay-at-home Canadians, but to show how illogical is the feeling against aliens so long as they are peaceable and law-abiding. It is well to remember that these people were invited to our shores by our Government as immigrants and if proper steps were not taken at the time to see that they should within a reasonable time become citizens that is not the alien's fault. As regards this question of the relative responsibility of the alien and the Canadian citizen, it would seem that much more would naturally be expected of the latter, who has lived here from childhood and has all his life been trained to uphold the ideals for which we are fighting.

The serious problem is really not what Mr. Bengough states, but is contained in the following question: "Can a nation conscript or ask some of its citizens to volunteer for overseas services, with its attendant hardship and risks and on a bare living wage, and at the same time allow many others to amass fortunes?"

Some slight attempt has been made to answer this question by taxation. The proper answer is suggested in the faint-hearted demand which has been voiced from time to time that wealth be conscripted. The practical idea might better be called "conscription of incomes." The latter expression is self-explanatory and would simply mean a graded income tax so severe that no income, including dividends and salaries, could exceed, say, \$10,000, and most would be graded down to say \$1,500. No lower income should be taxed.

Such a scheme would obviously present many difficulties, but not necessarily insuperable ones. The great barrier to bringing in such fair and just legislation is the fact that the influential men of the country are also men of wealth. Just as many men have sacrificed money and position to go overseas in the army, so, many wealthy men would be glad to make monetary sacrifices to see a fair method of distribution of cost of the war. None, however, in places of influence would care to be in the position of leading a definite, determined agitation to bring this about on account of the probable bitter antagonism of some of their business friends and associates.

There is surely a chance here for some Canadian to show the world that Canada can produce a great man with moral courage equal to that of a Lloyd George or a Wilson. If such cannot be found in the political arena it does not seem entirely unreasonable to look to some leader in the financial or industrial world to take the initiative. Canada is great on the field of battle, but she has not yet shown her greatness as a successful democracy.

Behind this demand for proper distribution so far as possible of the cost of the war in money and suffering there is not the idea of anarchy or even of socialism. It is the just desire of law-abiding citizens for British fair play in a democracy that they wish to be real.

Toronto, Aug. 6.

Fair Play.