

FRIENDS WOULD FREE INTERNED GALICIAN FARMER

Bird's Hill Man Under Arrest For Refusal To Sign Registration Card

Habeas corpus proceedings are contemplated by residents of Bird's Hill, Man., because of the alleged unjust treatment accorded Harry Bodner, a wealthy Galician farmer of that locality. Bodner was arrested March 29 because he refused to sign a National Service card. Without trial or a chance to defend himself he was condemned to internment for the period of the war, it is alleged. He has lived 14 years in Manitoba and has a wife and six small children.

Councillor William Waugh, brother of ex-Mayor Waugh of Winnipeg and a leader in patriotic enterprises in the district, is heading the agitation for Bodner's release. Walter A. Gorse and J. D. Suffield, barristers, have been retained to effect this by legal process if other means now pending fail.

Reports Self As Alien

Bodner is 35 years old. Although 14 years resident of Manitoba he was never naturalized. When war broke out he reported himself as an alien and since that time complied with all the requirements, his friends declare.

In January national service cards were circulated in Bird's Hill district. Bodner said he could not understand their purport. He said he believed that signing the card would in some way bind him to take up arms against "his brothers." He is loyal to Canada, he says in an affidavit, but could never bring himself to fight his own kith and kin, "unless they invaded Canada."

His six children are being educated as British subjects, he asserts, and he would not protest their fighting for Canada.

Because of his interpretation of the National Service scheme Bodner alleges he refused to sign. He talked with the postmaster about it and obtained the impression that he was under no obligation to do so, he says.

He said he heard nothing more about it until March 29 when he was arrested and brought before Capt. U. J. A. Davidson, registrar of aliens. He was charged with refusing to sign a registration card, and urging others to act similarly. He denied the latter charge. His accusers did not confront him, he declares. He was told the postmaster and postman had made affidavits to that effect. He asked permission to produce evidence as to his loyalty and good behaviour, he says. The request was refused, he alleges.

He was sentenced to internment for the period of the war.

As soon as his neighbors knew the facts they asked Mr. Gorse to communicate with the authorities with a view to effecting his release. This was done. Capt. Davidson said the matter was out of his hands, Bodner alleges. Capt. Davidson treated the intercessors courteously they said, but said that an appeal to the minister of justice at Ottawa is the only plan.

Fifteen Affidavits Made

The appeal to Hon. C. J. Doherty was made. Fifteen affidavits were signed by well known British subjects of Bird's Hill affirming Bodner's good character. These were sent together with a National Service card signed by Bodner, and an affidavit by him outlining the facts of the case. The minister was asked to wire reply.

No reply was vouchsafed until Tuesday. The minister said he had placed the facts in the hands of Gen. W. H. Otter, director of alien registration.

In the meantime Bodner is in detention. He has not been sent east to the internment camp. This privilege was accorded him, but he is kept here at his own expense.

The matter is at a standstill until Gen. Otter makes his finding. If the reply is adverse, Bird's Hill residents will instruct their lawyers to start habeas corpus proceedings in the courts despite the difficulties which surround the conflict of law with actions that are characterized "military necessity."