

DISFRANCHISE ENEMY BORN

One more symptom of the breakdown of cosmopolitanism under the stress of war is found in Australia, where the cabinet has decided to disfranchise German-born electors for the duration of the war. Suspicion of one element in the population by another is not the least of the ills which war brings to a hospitable democracy.

The decision of Australia on this important question is worthy of careful consideration by men in public and private life in Canada. We are in this war as citizens of the British Empire, battling to destroy and obliterate from the face of the earth one of the governing impulses of the German people as shown by their conduct of the war, i.e., that necessity knows no law. To the end that German ideals and ideas might triumph, that Germany might impose her wishes on the whole world, her people were taught and have accepted the teaching, that the state is supreme, that necessity, particularly military necessity, counted only gains without regard to methods or cost.

These ideas and ideals we as a British people are combatting with the resources of men and money at our command and it is our duty to remove all obstacles which tend in any fashion to hamper our efforts or destroy our effectiveness. Among our cosmopolitan population are thousands of people of enemy birth, whose instincts urge them to reject the evidences of inhuman warfare waged by their relatives overseas. Some have openly expressed their sympathy with the fatherland and for the more flagrant evidences of disloyalty to the British Empire, we have caused a few to be interned, but the great majority enjoy the full privileges of citizenship.

The spirit that pervades the homes of many of these people is illustrated by the experience of a prominent citizen the other day. He was driving through North Brandon and overtook a little girl on her way to school. She was invited to a seat in the cutter and accepted. In response to casual and good natured queries designed to make the little one comfortable and to pass the time, the child frankly replied that she was "a German." The childish mind mirrored the home attitude in which evidently the word German was associated with no thought of "the frightfulness" with which the civilized world has come to look on it.

In all walks of life there are men whose thirst for success leads to the adoption of unscrupulous methods. Political parties are no exception, in fact these exploiters have in the past been particularly numerous in public life in Canada and there is little reason to believe that they have found the field unprofitable or that they have abandoned it at the present time.

What better field for operation by these exploiters than this alien vote? A simple way out suggests itself not only for the present but for the future, the disfranchisement of enemy-born people during the war, and the imposition of literacy tests ere the franchise be extended any elector.

The Australians lead the way.