

military matters, it was stated that the general officer commanding had never been under fire, and consequently did not have the experience necessary to the performance of the duties of such a high, onerous and responsible position. The ex-Minister of Militia (Sir Sam Hughes) has stated that when this officer was nominated by him for that very high position, the military authorities in England said that he was not fit for the office. The ex-minister further said that he overruled that advice and appointed this man to the position in question. This is a matter of great importance, demanding some explanation from the Prime Minister, the Minister of Militia and the Government generally.

If there is any time when we should have talent of the highest character for a position of that kind, certainly it is during a time of war. In time of peace the administration of the Militia Department is a matter of training, and, to a great extent, of cuttings, exercises and good times—I do not begrudge that to those who take upon themselves the responsibility of joining the militia. Under these conditions, the character of the officer commanding is not, perhaps, so very important. But when we are up against the cannon's mouth, when we are fighting enemies like Germany and Austria, our boys who go to the front should, in their training, be given the benefit of the very best talent and

5 p.m. should be afforded every protection that can possibly be thrown about them. When we are told that the general officer commanding, responsible for the important duties to be discharged in connection with the work to which I have referred, was rejected by the military authorities in England, I can find no excuse for the Government's accepting him and holding him in the responsible position which he holds to-day and has held ever since the war broke out. The ex-Minister of Militia has just said that all members of the Government should not be generally responsible for administration of different departments, that the officers of each department should be responsible to the head, but that there should be no general responsibility on the part of the Government for the actions of each minister. That is not the constitution of this country, nor the practice of government in Great Britain; the whole Government are held responsible for the acts of one minister; the responsibility is general all around. I submit, therefore, that the Prime Minister

and those who sit around him are responsible to the people and must share the blame for having accepted the recommendation of the Minister of Militia for the appointment of a man who was evidently unfit for the position.

Reason may be found in this for the many irregularities and difficulties that have been experienced in this country since the war broke out—in connection with which, as we know, the Prime Minister, at least in one case, took very drastic action. There have been irregularities; there has been maladministration; things have been going wrong. One glaring case was brought to the attention of the House to-day. On one occasion the second contingent was held up in Canada for four months for reasons that were never satisfactorily explained. It is possible that this functionary, who, not having knowledge of or qualification for his position, did not see to it that the contingent was immediately sent forward and was responsible for this delay. It is possible that his inefficiency and the fact that he was subservient to the wishes of other people—particularly to the wishes of those who appointed him though not qualified—were causes for the action which was taken in connection with the second contingent.

I do not desire to introduce any acrimonious debate by going over a list of the different shortcomings of the Government in connection with this matter.

But the people of this country will readily understand why things have gone wrong and matters have not been properly handled, when they learn that we have at the head of military affairs a man who does not know anything about his business, whom the British War Office refused to recommend for the position, but who was put into the position evidently over their heads. If we had a case in which we required a doctor, would we call in a man who was not a doctor? If we wanted a lawyer to plead a case of a serious character, would we engage a man who was not a lawyer? And the same is true of all the other classes of people who require qualifications of the highest character. But in a greater case than one requiring the services of a doctor or a lawyer, in a case requiring the services of a general officer commanding our army in the awful crisis which we have been facing for the last three years, we have, on the admission of the Government to-day, a man who evidently knew nothing whatever about the business, and