

MILITARISM vs. PATRIOTISM

By F. W. Gray.

Application has been made by some of the men of Sydney, Cape Breton, for permission to form a city regiment. Most people noticing this announcement would regard it as a natural and commendable action for Sydney men to take in this day of supreme effort. But the Sydney Trades and Labor Council have before them a resolution of protest against the formation of this mooted regiment because of the tendency it betrays to foster "the abuse of militarism."

No doubt the men who framed this resolution are excellent citizens and sincere in their convictions, but like many persons whose thinking is confused or superficial they mistake current shibboleths for verity, and they use specious phrases without analyzing their real inwardness. What does the word "militarism" imply? Certainly it is a misnomer in the sense in which it has been used, and apparently is still used, by a certain school of trade unionists if applied to home defence. The so-called Trades and Labor Congress is professedly an international body which has affiliations with the American Federation of Labor and such reactionary bodies as the United Mine Workers of America. The deprecation of home militias, for reasons which have been sufficiently obvious in Cape Breton, in Vancouver and in Colorado, is a plank in the political platform of the Trades and Labor Congress and its affiliations on the other side of the line, and this attitude has unfortunately clouded the thinking of many well-meaning men who, probably, if they thoroughly dissected their mental processes would find themselves to be patriots in the truest sense of that much misused word. All sane men denounce the abuse of militarism, and it is because of the widespread hatred of militarism among the British nation that the Empire is now engaged in what all thinking Britons reverently believe to be a righteous war against the desolating idea which finds its grimmest exemplification in the Prussian military system. We commend to the careful consideration of all trade unionists in Canada the following extracts from a resolution adopted by the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress of Great Britain, after a two-days' conference. It proceeds:—

"The Parliamentary Committee are convinced that one important factor in the present European struggle has to be borne in mind so far as our own country is concerned—namely, that in the event of the voluntary system of military service failing the country in its time of need, the demand for a national system of compulsory military service will not only be made with redoubled vigor, but may prove to be so persistent and strong as to become irresistible. The prospect of having to face conscription, with its permanent and heavy burden upon the financial resources of the country, and its equally burdensome effect upon nearly the whole of its industries, should in itself stimulate the manhood of the nation to come forward in its defence, and thereby demonstrate to the world that a free people can rise to the supreme heights of a great sacrifice without the whip of conscription.

"Another factor to be remembered in this crisis of our nation's history, and most important of all so far as trade unionists and labor in general are concerned, is the fact that upon the result of this struggle in which this country is now engaged rests the preserva-

tion and maintenance of free and unfettered democratic government, which in its international relationships has in the past been recognized and must unquestionably in the future prove to be the best guarantee for the preservation of the peace of the world.

"The mere contemplation of the overbearing and brutal methods to which people have to submit under a government controlled by a military autocracy—living, as it were, continuously under the threat and shadow of war—should be sufficient to arouse the enthusiasm of the nation in resisting any attempt to impose similar conditions upon countries at present free from military despotism."

This is the studied opinion of the highest deliberative body of the representatives of labor in the very home of trade unionism—members of the Mother of Parliaments—and it may be conceded that Britons understand and practise the truest and completest democracy yet evolved.

A recent editorial of the Chicago Tribune, after reviewing the wonderful unanimity of the Empire in this struggle naively concludes that the British Empire "is a queer institution" and concludes by saying "in reality there is nothing queer about it. The undoubted truth of the matter is that the words 'British Empire' stand for the greatest republic the world has ever seen."

In Mr. Asquith's eloquent and burning speech recently delivered in the House of Commons he likened Belgium to Sparta and Athens and reminded the world of the marvellous defence of the Dutch Republics against the military autocracy of Charles V. of Spain. Mr. Asquith rightly upheld the British Empire as the age-long champion of the small nationality. Indeed, what does the British Empire consist of but a group of small independent nationalities, bound together by a common origin and common aims, and destined to a still closer union and a more glorious future than even its storied past?

But suppose the Empire, crushed by the heel of the Prussian Junker, and our quiet homes given to the flames as Louvain was, our wives and daughters subjected to nameless outrage as the women of Louvain were, our religious edifices and teachers treated as they were treated in Louvain, would Canadian trade unionists consider that Canadian troops were exponents of the "abuse of militarism"?

No, we will not do Canadian trade unionists the injustice of thinking that they will play any other part in this "crowded hour" of our Empire's life than the part of men who fight for the country of their fathers and the temples of their God. They will be found saying with Bret Harte:—

Hark! I hear the tramp of thousands
And of armed men the hum;
Lo! a nation's hosts have gathered
Round the quick alarming drum,—
Saying, "Come,
Freemen, come!

Ere your heritage be wasted," said the quick
alarming drum.

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And the great heart of the nation, throbbing,
answered, "Lord, we come!"