

portance and it concerned part of a great Government measure that had been engaging the attention of Parliament. The British Parliament has lately been dealing with the very important question of the franchise. A new franchise law has been enacted, which contains, among other important provisions, one for granting the privilege of voting to several million women. In the consideration of this measure there arose the very important question of proportional representation—a system designed to secure representation for minorities—which has for a long time engaged the attention of advanced thinkers. After much discussion in both Lords and Commons an agreement was reached that, as an experiment, the principle of proportional representation should be applied to one hundred constituencies, and that commissioners be appointed to select the seats to which this arrangement could most conveniently be applied. The commissioners studied the subject carefully and made their report. In due course a member of the Government, Mr. Hayes Fisher, moved to confirm the report.

The reader will observe that the motion related to a material part of a great Government measure, and that it was to give effect to details of a conclusion that Parliament had in principle already adopted. If the Government, in such circumstances, had claimed that it must have the support of the House on this motion, or retire from office, perhaps some defence for such a course could have been offered. But even under such circumstances, with an important Government measure at stake, the idea of shackling the House could not be entertained for a moment. Mr. Fisher, the Minister of Education, who had charge of the matter, having made his motion, Mr. Pennefather, a Government supporter, at once raised the question of freedom of action, claiming that Mr. Fisher's motion should be regarded as expressing his personal views, and that every member of the House, even a member of the Cabinet, should be perfectly free to act according to his judgment. This, according to the ideas of Sir Robert Borden, was an unthinkable line of policy. The British Government, if Sir Robert was right, should have insisted on treating the motion as one of confidence or non-confidence. Mr. Lloyd George should have promptly declared that if he could not have his own way in this matter, he would refuse to play longer in the Union Government yard. He should have intimated that unless his Government's motion was accepted he would be obliged to hand his resignation to the King.

In this case it was not Sir Robert Borden who was called on to declare what should be done. It was Mr. Bonar Law, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, representing Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. Law at once said that the question should not be regarded as one of non-confidence, but that every member should feel free to vote as he pleased. Thereupon, the House divided, and the motion—a motion made by Mr. Fisher, a Minister of the Crown—was defeated, 166 to 118. Mr. Lloyd George did not resign or threaten to resign. He carried on his business of winning the war.

That is how such matters are treated in the "Mother of Parliaments," where freedom of discussion and action is valued—a Parliament which would never dream of submitting to the shackles that were imposed on the House of Commons of Canada a few days ago.

## Henry Ford

IT IS a question whether the extraordinary business ability manifested by Mr. Henry Ford, the automobile maker, will prove to be of great value in the field of American politics which he is about to enter. Many a man who has been successful in his own line of business has made but little mark in Congress or Parliament. Mr. Ford combines with his business talent an eccentricity which was illustrated by his quixotic peace expedition to Europe. He has made amends for this, however, by putting all his energies and resources at the disposal of the Government in the production of airplane engines and submarine chasers, and is now counted among the most useful war-workers. His entrance on the political sea will be watched with much interest. Though not much of a politician he has been regarded as a Republican. Notwithstanding this President Wilson has asked him to stand as a candidate for the representation of Michigan in the United States Senate. The Democrats apparently are content to support him. But the leaders of the Republican party in the State look with suspicion on a candidate chosen by a Democratic President, and it is possible that Mr. Ford may have to fight for the seat, instead of winning it by acclamation as the President seemed to expect to be the case. Party feeling is less keen than usual and the whole nation is standing loyally by the President in his war policy. But the United States Senatorships are, next to the Presidency, the grand prizes in the political game, and there will be few cases in which they will be won without contests.

## A Minister of Public Health

THE National Council of Women, recently assembled at Brantford, passed many resolutions designed for the promotion of the public good. On one point, however, the ladies seem to have failed to appreciate the system of government to which they appeal for the carrying out of their good ends. They ask for the establishing of "a Federal Department of Health . . . under the direction of a Minister, chosen not on account of political affiliation, but only on the basis of competence." That will look to many like a fair proposition. But it will need considerable legislation, much revision of custom, and perhaps an amendment to the British North America Act to give it effect. Calling a man Minister of Public Health will give no guarantee that he is an expert on health, or even that he is a medical man. We have a department of Agriculture, but rarely is it presided over by a practical agriculturist. We have a department of Railways, but never has it had at its head a railway engineer, or railway builder, or railway manager. If we create a department of Public Health, in nine cases out of ten its head will not be a medical man at all.

Competence of course should be considered essential in the making of all appointments. But other things as well, which the good ladies forget, have to be thought of when Cabinet offices are to be filled. The Heaven born Minister of Public Health will have to be a Member of Parliament, and the "political affiliations" which the ladies scorn usually have something to do with the getting of seats in Parliament. Geographical difficulties may arise. The competent Minister of Public Health may be found in a Province which already has all the Cabi-

net representation that can conveniently be allowed to it. Religious or racial considerations will weigh much. The health expert may belong to the race or creed that already is believed to be quite sufficiently represented. All these considerations the ladies would brush aside. They see no reasons why a man's "political affiliations" should have anything to do with his selection for a place in the Cabinet. They cannot see why there should not be a Liberal Minister of Public Health in a Conservative Government, or vice versa. In their opinion apparently, the political events which make or unmake governments should not affect the Minister of Public Health. Men might come and men might go, as respects other departments, but the competent Minister of Public Health, once found, should go on forever. The ladies, who are now in the enjoyment of full-fledged citizenship, may bring about many changes, but it is hardly probable that they can accomplish what they propose in relation to the office of Minister of Public Health.

## The Y. M. C. A.

IMMEDIATELY following the very successful campaign for funds for the war work of the Young Men's Christian Association came complaints from some of the returned soldiers that that institution was not doing the good work with which it was generally credited, that it charged high prices for the things that it sold to the troops, that the organization was making a profit out of the transactions, etc. Many soldiers and others acquainted with the Y. M. C. A. work promptly came to the defence of the Association. Most people, we believe, are satisfied that the Y. M. C. A. has been doing excellent work and is in all respects worthy of public confidence and support. It cannot be denied, however, that the complaints made left an impression in some quarters that the institution should furnish the public with fuller details of its operations, particularly as respects its receipts and expenditures. It would be well if the leaders of the organization would respond to this call as far as possible, so that the good work of the Association may be above question. Nobody imagines for a moment that anyone connected with the Y. M. C. A. reaps any personal gain from its operations. The leaders of the institution are men of the highest character and public spirit, who have given their time and means to the work in a way which demand the gratitude of the soldiers and of the public. We may be sure that if any particular part of the Association's operations was carried on at a profit the gain was applied to some other branch of the service, and that the whole work has been carried on with a single eye to the good of the soldiers in Canada and overseas. For one soldier who has found cause to complain there are, we believe, twenty who stand ready to testify to the value of the Association's work. So much good has been done and is being done by the Y. M. C. A. that to have even a shadow of complaint against it is a public misfortune. Hence all reasonable requests—and even some that may not be entirely reasonable—for information should be met, in order that the high regard of the public for the organization may be in no way impaired.

"Senator" writes us a letter which is of a personal character rather than a discussion of a public question. Nevertheless, if he will sign his own name to it the letter will be published.