



RECRUITING nets are being woven that no capable man of military age may escape voluntary enlistment in any area where such nets exist. These nets are not to be made and operated by the Government. They are the work of the military districts and the officers commanding the same, by and with the consent of the Militia Department. Can one tell us the ethical difference between this and conscription? If a man is to be practically forced to enlist because not to do so will subject him to no end of solicitation, had he not better be compelled to enlist because the law of the land says that he must? Everybody knows scores of men who could be and are not doing service for the country except by holding some job. Holding a job may or may not be of national service. It depends upon the job. When it comes to separating a man from his job, which is to be regarded as an authentic judge—the militia or the government? If the government should institute a national register, doing it as speedily as possible by any machinery available under the census department, would it not make the military dragnet absolutely unnecessary? The need exists. There are thousands of men, even in the areas where recruiting has been active and efficient, who are not doing the work that makes them most effective to the nation. There are thousands of men rejected for active service in the field who are capable of clerical service or work in the Army Service Corps. There are thousands incapable of going to the front who might be helping to make munitions. There are thousands more who might be engaged in helping to make the land more productive and in saving the wealth that comes from the land. Many western farmers are said to be still unable to thresh their grain because of a lack of labour. There are men going about with snow shovels who might be doing national service. There are men in police uniform who might better be in khaki. There are able-bodied citizens capable of acting as police. There are people doing perfunctory service who should be working at high pressure in business. If we are anxious to get the energy of this nation concentrated upon the work of winning the war we shall act as though we believed that every man may be a soldier whether at home or abroad. By all means let us prefer the national register to the military dragnet or conscription, and let the Government employ the soldiers to help organize the register. Canada does not want conscription. And the military dragnet is a poor substitute for a common-sense inventory of our national resources in a time of war.

WAR is teaching us all economic virtues which were neglected in times of peace. We are only beginning to estimate the value of thrift. When commodities are scarce and prices high we begin to experiment how to get along without so much of them and without any at all that may be classed as luxuries. The business of saving in order to prevent waste is now the common luxury of everybody. We are merely getting more value of what we spend. In times of so-called prosperity it is the wasted material, time, talent and energy that keeps hard times always in the near background. In times of stringency, especially in a time of war, it is the prevention of waste that keeps the community efficient. The man or woman who will not learn to prevent waste in good times must learn to do so in the pinch of necessity. He can learn no better lesson. The great pity is that people have to wait for a war in order to do what should have been taught them by experience from their youth up. Now that the nation is learning to economize by force of necessity, it is to be expected that it will continue to do so after the war as a national characteristic. When the losses and gains, the triumphs and sorrows of the great calamity are estimated, if they ever can be, we shall reckon this lesson of national thrift as one of the most valuable to this or to any other country. It may be less grandiloquent than some of the other issues alluded to by high-minded writers and orators. We are much mistaken if we do not find it much the most useful of all the lessons of the war.

BURNING war loan bonds is the latest form of self-sacrificing patriotism and appears to have been devised by a number of Englishmen as a way in which to mitigate the national debt which the war piles higher every day. The scheme is picturesque and sound, and there are men and women in Canada who may yet see their way clear to following the example by destroying or returning to the Minister of Finance for destruction, Canadian war loan bonds.

Of course it is a matter for each man to decide for himself. But there is this to be said further: lending money to the Canadian Government at five per cent. or five and a half per cent. per annum is not very heroic. It is—honestly—not to be mentioned in the same breath with the heroism of some charwoman who, having but one child and no hope for more to comfort her uncertain old age, gives that one to almost certain death. She draws no interest. She clips no coupons.

The only legacy she can leave when she dies is the memory of a plain duty, calmly done. In twenty years she will have nothing and be nothing. In twenty years the owner of a war loan bond will have doubled his money.

Far be it from us to chide the buyers of war loan bonds. They too have their inner problems. But this is worth pondering: that the poor after the war shall be only the poorer for its passing; and the rich richer. The burning of war loan bonds would help keep rich and poor a little nearer together in the future recollection of their present common sufferings.

A COALITION Government for Canada has been urged lately in some quarters, not entirely without reason. It has even been suggested by an influential Liberal newspaper that Sir Wilfrid Laurier, if he should be returned to power in the next election, might invite the Conservatives to aid him in forming such a government. This would be one of the most unusual campaign slogans ever known in this or any other democracy. There are said to be many good reasons why coalition should have been accomplished before this; reasons why even now the Government of Canada should now invite the Liberal Opposition to form such a bi-party government. We are not now discussing those reasons which are considered by their advocates quite fundamental enough not to be disposed of in any one article. We are, however, considerably exercised over the difference between any coalition asked for by the present Government and a coalition issue created into a platform for an election. An executive amalgamation now would be a tolerably sure way of making a general election impossible until the war is over. We assume that it would be entered into for the purpose of better prosecuting the war as the work of a united nation, and that until the accomplishment of this work no appeal to the country to divide on political lines would be tolerated by either party. A coalition stipulated as a national device for a victorious Liberal party would of course entail a general election in order to make it possible. Between the coalition that averts and the coalition that brings on an election we do not know that the people of Canada are as yet called upon to decide.

WHAT is the position of a country that is exporting so much of its foodstuff as to make the cost of living almost unbearable to its own people? That is practically the position of Canada to-day. We are so busy sending our wheat, flour, bacon, butter and eggs to foreign buyers that we haven't the usual quantities left at home, and we are forced to pay our own people the export price or get none. Someone is getting rich under these circumstances. It is to be hoped that the farmer is getting some of the benefit of the increased prices, but it is to be feared that the export houses, shipping concerns and other middlemen are the real beneficiaries. In other words, the money which the reluctant city dweller has to part with for his grocer and butcher-shop bills, is not just being redistributed equally over the whole country. It is not going toward the general prosperity, reacting favourably on the very man who spends it. It is only too likely that money is making a few men wealthy. The proposed action of the Government should be directed toward uncovering this point and correcting it if it is proven to be true.

AMUSEMENTS seem to be having a hard time in Toronto of late. The daily newspapers put up the price of casual advertising more than sixty per cent., an advance which they claim should have been gradually made long ago. Certain amusement houses, including one of the leading theatres, refused at first to pay the increase. Result—no advertising in most of the Toronto papers for so eminent an actor as Sir Beerbohm Tree. But Mr. Tree was not willing to run the risk of missing capacity houses by a lack of sufficient advertising. It began to look as if the general public would not be informed of the presence of Sir Beerbohm, Edith Wynne Matthison, Lyn Harding and a huge company of players doing Henry VIII. There would be no criticism of the play in any of the papers not carrying the advertising of the house in which Henry VIII. was to be staged. There was no moral objection to Henry VIII. because he had so many wives and beheaded one or two of them. It was merely a difficulty between the box office of the theatre and the box offices of the newspapers. In this case it appears the newspapers won out. The actor was not known here except by a great reputation. He was not willing to risk it. At least so it would appear. And we do not blame him. To bring so eminent an actor for a first visit to any Canadian city is too big an undertaking, too important to the general public, not to be supported by the press.