

“That we reject for our association and ourselves any claim to special or peculiar favours, based on our military service, simply demanding our just rights as returned citizens of this country to be placed on an equality with our fellow citizens, who were not privileged to serve.”

The purpose of our association was an interest in the national welfare—very distinctly. We have sought to preserve a proper standard of citizenship and national idea. We feel that in proportional representation the opinions of the electorate will be more faithfully represented in the House of Commons, and this will do a great deal toward promoting national harmony and reducing the apparent unrest. In that general way we are definitely in support of proportional representation.

The second reason is this: Although primarily our organization is a fraternal organization, we have found it necessary to approach the Government on numerous occasions for various legislation relating to returned soldiers. Hitherto our association has been definitely opposed to anything savouring of partizan political action. The need has, up to the present time, been very acute in many respects. It has not always been possible for the Government to accede fully to our requests, and the result has been that among returned soldiers there has been created a very large class of men who are dissatisfied with the legislative action taken with regard to their need, and their demand is for political action. Now, the association in considering this question has been opposed to political action as vaguely expressed in that way. Although we have been accused of fostering a class consciousness, as a matter of fact, our organization is working very definitely against just that sort of thing. We are not anxious that the returned soldiers should be constituted a distinct and separate group from other citizens. There is some degree of comradeship and fraternalism,—some sort of mystic bonds that exist among men who have faced common dangers, but we have not endeavoured to capitalize that, for any selfish interests of the returned soldier, but rather to promote the welfare of the whole country and that can be done as a benefit to the country and not as a menace. We are very anxious, therefore, that any influence which can be created on account of that bond be not exploited nor bartered for. We think the dissatisfaction which has arisen owing to the apparent inability of the Government to deal fully with the demands which have arisen from time to time, and the dissatisfaction which shows, where they could not get what they wanted, by the ordinary method of petition, if it be by organized representation, and we will, therefore, demand action at the polls. We think that through proportional representation we shall find a safe outlet. We are all endeavouring to prevent the formation of any other group—

Q. You consider that proportional representation is rather a detriment to grouping than a benefit?—A. Oh, yes. Proportional representation, for instance, in our case, would very definitely neutralize what would result by any political action in the formation of a group. The returned soldier would feel that he would have an opportunity of expressing in the House his legislative needs without in any way segregating himself as a returned soldier and believing this, what the returned soldier should do is to realize that he is a citizen, and not as a class apart at all. I hope I have made that clear.

Q. Your belief is then, in conducting an election under proportional representation that it would be more harmonious and some would get the views of the people better?—A. Yes.

Q. It would do away with party strife and factions?—A. Yes, and what is very important as well, sir, it would revive the waning confidence in constitutional—we must admit it, there is a spirit abroad which tends to distrust our present parliamentary institutions, and with proportional representation, there would be a very faithful reflection of opinion, and there would be a corresponding increase in the confidence shown, and less desire to take unconstitutional methods for redress of grievances.

[Mr. C. G. MacNeil.]