

A TWO-EDGED ARGUMENT.

COMMENTING on the now time-worn excuse of the Nationalist-Conservative government that the proved grafting and inefficiency in the purchase of war supplies in the early stages of the War were due to the unexpectedness of the call on the Militia Department, the *Ottawa Citizen* calls attention to the fact that this specious plea fails to jibe with another favorite argument of members of the Government in connection with the Navy policy and the opposition of the Liberals to a policy of contribution. The "emergency" cry is thus seen to give the lie to itself as used by the Borden apologists. The following is from the *Citizen* of July 8th:

Canadian Preparedness.

One outstanding fact in connection with the investigation now being held into the various contracts for militia supplies is the almost invariable plea put forward on behalf of the militia department and the government that the contracts were let in most, if not all cases, without tender because of the extreme necessity for haste. The country purchased horses without tender, medical dressings without tender, hospital supplies without competitive prices being asked, and a host of other articles in similar fashion—because there was no time to call for tenders. This, we think, is true. Passing over the entirely gratuitous information by officials of the militia department that prices in some of the cases under investigation were "fair and reasonable," it is obvious that the sudden call of the War trumpet found Canada unprepared to equip the number of men which the militia department was confident it could raise.

Granting the excuse that haste was imperative, what becomes of the claim made on numerous occasions by the organs of the administration and even by the prime minister himself that there was a well defined reason in administrative circles to believe that an emergency existed? We have been repeatedly assured also by such prominent publications as the *National Review* that the coming crisis was long ago appreciated in Britain. Is it possible that this information was not communicated to our government? And, finally, is it not suspiciously like a dereliction of national duty that our own administration, which now claims to have been aware of the urgent necessity for a contribution in ships and money to the British navy, deliberately neglected to provide for our land contribution to Imperial defence in the emergency it so clearly saw coming?

There is no politics in asking these questions. But there is the necessity of showing how one of the political parties is attempting to make capital out of the great conflict on the one hand and excuse itself by a reversal of the same plea on the other. How was it that the government, aware of an emergency, was anxious to help the empire in naval contributions and yet was absolutely neglectful of the equipment needed for our own forces, which, in the light of the South African war precedent, were certain to be offered on behalf of the empire when "the day" arrived?

MANUFACTURERS PLACE THE BLAME.

INTERFERENCE by politicians in the business of the Militia Department at Ottawa, as well as the alleged fact that the department was overworked and undermanned, is held by President Henderson of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association to be the real cause why Canadian war supplies did not come up to specifications. In his address at the annual meeting of the Association at Toronto on June 9th, President Henderson declared that it was not always fair to impugn the motives of the manufacturers supplying the goods complained of. He went on to say;

"The exacting demands of the Militia Department, in the matter of deliveries handicapped the contractors, and the department itself, taken unawares, was overworked and understaffed.

"To the pernicious influence the officers of the department were exposed and to the restrictions by which they were surrounded, does criticism properly attach. Any man upon whom the duty is laid of purchasing military equipment to meet an emergency ought first to be appointed on the sole ground of his qualifications for the position and ought then to be given a free hand to act in accordance with the dictates of his own judgment. **But he cannot so act if the list of persons or firms with whom he shall negotiate is definitely prescribed for him; still less can he do so if he is required to pay heed to the promptings of those who have only political ends to serve.**"

This is President Henderson's rejoinder to the prolonged effort of the apologists of the Nationalist-Conservative party to put all the blame for war contract scandals on the shoulders of the manufacturers. Mr. Henderson simply makes a little plainer what has been fairly plain to the public all along.

ANOTHER ABSURDITY.

EVER since the War broke out, the Dominion Department of Agriculture has been preaching to the farmer that the salvation of the country practically depends upon more production from the soil. Hon. W. T. White backed them up, and upon many platforms he actually raised the duty on fertilizers from 10% to 17½%. In one breath he tells the farmer to produce more, and in the next he makes it more difficult for him to produce. Mr. White should have known, what is common knowledge to thinking men, namely that the intelligent use of fertilizers is absolutely essential to increased productivity of the soil. When he saw the light, through Liberal criticism, he corrected the blunder by making fertilizers exempt from the 7½% War Tax. But he did not go far enough and thereby missed a great opportunity. Manifestly the proper course to have taken was to make fertilizers free. In no better way could a stimulus be given to the movement towards increased production from the soil.