

the dissent from the opinion of the majority of the Canadian people was regrettable, there was nothing in the action of the electors of Quebec Province that was not within their rights. The wisdom of the passing of the Act was a legitimate ground for difference of opinion in this democratic country. But when the Act was so emphatically endorsed by the great mass of the Canadian people, every consideration of law and order and good government required that the Quebec people should cease their resistance. That will, we believe, be the feeling of the great mass of the electors of the Province. Unfortunately, a large number of men in Quebec city have refused to take this reasonable view. Their riotous proceedings on Saturday and Sunday cannot be excused or condoned. Such conduct at such a time as this calls for vigorous action by civic, Provincial and Dominion authority. The Military Service Act must be enforced in Quebec as in other parts of the Dominion. Disorder must be suppressed, order maintained, the rioters severely punished. Let us hope that the ringleaders of the riots may be found and such punishment inflicted on them as will vindicate the majesty of the law.

### Steel Shipbuilding

THE important announcement has been made that Hon. Mr. Ballantyne, Minister of Marine, has made an agreement with the Dominion Steel Corporation, under which the latter will construct forthwith, in connection with its steel plant at Sydney, N.S., a mill for the rolling of ship plates. Steel shipbuilding in Canada has been carried on to a small extent only, one of the reasons for this being the fact that all ship plates had to be imported, as none of our steel companies have yet produced such things. In the case of the orders given for a number of ships now under construction in Canada arrangements were made with the American authorities to allow the export to Canada of a sufficient quantity of plates to serve the purpose. But this arrangement was only temporary. To ensure large scale assurance of a supply of plates was necessary. The difficulty is to be overcome by the construction of a plate mill at the Dominion Company's Sydney works.

The movement is one of great importance, not only because of its bearing on the immediate need of tonnage, but also because the construction of the mill marks a great advance in the industrial life of the country, and gives reasonable assurance of the creation of permanent shipbuilding industries of an extensive character. Details of the arrangement have not yet been made public. The object of the movement is in every respect praiseworthy, and any reasonable contract between the Government and the Dominion Company will have public approval.

### The Senate's Frills

THE Senate of Canada ought to be a body exhibiting more than an ordinary share of wisdom. With the exception of a very few frivolous youths the members are of quite mature years, and age is commonly supposed to bring wisdom. The Senate's committee on "contingencies" seems to have queer notions of what is properly comprised in that word.

Under this head the venerable Senators were supplied last year with 100 ladies' bags at \$10 each, and 40 ladies' purses at \$5.50 each. One cannot fail to notice the small number of purses. There were bags enough to go round and have a surplus, but where there were only 40 purses, it is evident that there was some process of discrimination or selection. Are

we to be forced to the conclusion that only 40 of the Senators permit their wives to have purses? To facilitate a study of domestic life it might be useful to have a list of those who supplied their better halves with purses, and those who refused to encourage such forms of feminine independence. The audacious Auditor-General, it seems, questioned the propriety of such expenditures, whereupon the clerk of the Senate, presumably acting under directions, replied that the things referred to had been ordered by the Senate, and that fact should be sufficient for the Auditor—a short way of telling him it was none of his business.

The amount involved is not large enough to be important at a time when our net debt is reaching a billion dollars. But the claim of the Senate that it is not accountable to anybody for its expenditures is a point large enough to attract public attention. A body much more strongly entrenched in public favor might well hesitate to assume such an attitude. When a House whose usefulness is (unjustly we admit) widely challenged, takes this high and mighty pose, it does not give evidence of the wisdom that should be expected from elderly gentlemen. It would certainly be better that these trinkets be excluded from the list of the Senate's contingencies. But if such things are to be supplied as "contingencies" in either House the members authorizing them should at least be prepared to be very polite to the inquiring watch-dog of the Treasury. Probably the Senators regarded the Auditor-General as a mere official of a subordinate body known as the House of Commons. Every so-called Upper Chamber is usually prepared to resent anything savoring of inquiry into its affairs by the members of the "Lower" House. However, it is well to remember that the Auditor-General is the officer, not of the House only, but of Parliament, and that the whole of Parliament—even the Senate—is responsible to the people of Canada. So long as people assail the Senate with hard words—as many do—the members of that eminent body may smile and pursue their course without alarm. But the Senate cannot afford to make itself ridiculous.

### The Australian Crises

THE political crises which arose in the Commonwealth of Australia over the question of conscription was but imperfectly explained in the cablegrams of the time. Later news by mail enables us to better understand how it is that Mr. Hughes and his colleagues continued to remain in power.

Usually, it is the vote of Parliament or the vote of the electors that demands the retirement of a Government. Mr. Hughes' Cabinet were not at the time defeated in Parliament. The vote of the electors which Mr. Hughes regarded as adverse was not taken on a direct issue of confidence or non-confidence. Mr. Hughes and his colleagues—those who remained with him after the break and reconstruction on the question of conscription—provided for a second referendum on conscription. In the course of the discussions before the people, Mr. Hughes had declared that he regarded the proposed conscription as so important that if it were defeated on the referendum he would feel it to be his duty to resign and turn over the management of the Commonwealth's affairs to his opponents.

Conscription was defeated for the second time by the popular vote. Mr. Hughes and his Cabinet, in accordance with his pledge, thereupon resigned office. Mr. Tudor, the leader of the Opposition, was called on by the Governor. Mr. Tudor was not unwilling to assume the responsibilities of office, but he felt that he could not carry on the Government with the

Parliament as it then stood. He would only accept office upon the condition that Parliament should be dissolved. In most cases a new Prime Minister who has been leader of the Opposition has a right to claim a dissolution, since he can hardly be expected to undertake the responsibilities of office subject to the will of a Parliament which was elected under the auspices of his opponents. There are, however, circumstances under which a Governor may properly be reluctant to grant a dissolution and this seemed to be an occasion for the exercise of the Governor's authority. The Governor-General, Sir R. Monro Fergusson, felt that as Australia had not long before had a general election, and had just been through the turbulence of a referendum on the question of conscription, another appeal to the people was undesirable, if it could be avoided. The relations between Government and Opposition were such that no coalition could be effected. Mr. Hughes had not been defeated in Parliament. He still had a majority apparently willing to support him. Under these circumstances the Governor thought the best solution of the difficulty was to ask Mr. Hughes and his colleagues to withdraw their resignations and resume their duties as his advisers.

The situation was one of much difficulty, one of the rare occasions which arise for the exercise by a Governor of an independent authority. Sir R. Monro Fergusson handled his problem with much wisdom and his action seems to have been generally accepted as the best course he could take. Mr. Hughes and his colleagues were obliged, of course, to abandon their conscription scheme, and rely on voluntary efforts to obtain the men needed for the strengthening of the Australian army.

Later events have produced further difficulty which may develop into another crisis. The Australian House a few days ago passed by a small majority an Opposition motion protesting against a reduction of war bonuses to railway employees. Evidently, Mr. Hughes' hold on the confidence of Parliament is not strong. Report says that he is contemplating another appeal to the people. But here a grave difficulty will present itself. To avoid the disturbance of another electoral contest, the Governor was justified in declining Mr. Tudor's request for a dissolution and in making a further effort to carry on the public business with Mr. Hughes as Prime Minister. The objection raised against Mr. Tudor's recommendation would apply with greater force to a request of Mr. Hughes for a dissolution. Mr. Hughes has had his dissolution. If there has to be another, Mr. Tudor, rather than Mr. Hughes, can claim it—that is to say, if Mr. Hughes cannot obtain from the present Parliament the support required to enable him to carry on, he will probably have to resign and let the appeal to the country be made by a Government led by Mr. Tudor.

Incidentally, it may be noticed that the adverse vote which threatens the Government was on a question arising from the Government ownership of the railways, the Opposition apparently being more generous than the Government to the railway workers. The Australian railways are managed by a Commission, which is supposed to have something like the independence that some advocates of universal Government ownership in Canada regard as essential. But they are finding in Australia, as we shall find in Canada, that Government ownership and Government and Parliamentary control are inseparable.

Later despatches indicate that Mr. Hughes is endeavoring to meet the situation with some reconstruction of his Ministry.