

**THE WEEKLY ONTARIO.**  
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THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 1918.

**THE MYSTERY STILL UNSOLVED.**

The mystery of Belleville coal prices is still unsolved. That statement does not necessarily mean that the mystery is incapable of solution or that efforts have been abandoned to discover the truth.

The Ontario asked Mr. Wills, the local fuel controller, in a former article, why the consumer at Belleville was asked to pay two dollars more for a ton of nut coal than the consumer who resides in Toronto is asked to do.

Pursuing the inquiry, The Ontario interviewed Mr. Wills and was informed that he was not being paid a single cent for the work of fuel controller, and that he had no power to regulate the prices.

As we see it, Mr. Wills, who was the sanitary inspector, was last winter assigned the additional duties of fuel controller, by the council, the work of the sanitary department at that time of the year not having been very strenuous. Mr. Wills accepted the additional commission and it therefore became just as much a part of his paid duties as the other. He did good work in the stress of the fuel famine last winter.

It is quite true that Mr. Wills has no power to regulate prices unless it be by indirect methods. The Ontario did not say that he had. Mr. Wills has power, however, to make the closest examination of books, to scrutinize invoices and to ascertain if proper charges are being made for delivery and office expenses.

Mr. Wills informs us that he has made inquiry along these lines and that he reported his findings, some time ago to the provincial controller at Toronto. The controller acknowledged receipt of the communication, and there the matter rested.

All that is very good as far as it goes, but the trouble is that it does not go very far. The meek and submissive inhabitants of this little burg go right on paying their twelve dollars for every ton of coal they buy while the Toronto householder gets his for ten dollars, just the same as if there were no controllers in existence.

There may be a most satisfactory explanation of the discrimination and the difference, but if there is an explanation available why the people of Belleville during the war and with fuel "control" in effect, are being asked to contribute tens of thousands of dollars more for their coal than big Toronto or the smaller Deseronto, the aforesaid people of Belleville would like to know about it.

The sooner this farce of fuel "control" is abandoned the better. What is being "controlled"? Belleville was far better off when no "control" existed.

If it takes the whole spring and summer for the provincial controller to notice such glaring inequalities as exist between the quotations for coal at Belleville and at any other city in the province, his department might stand a little speeding up.

We again would respectfully inquire why the people of Belleville are being asked to pay \$60,000 more for their coal, in proportion, this year than are the people of Toronto. Why are we asked to pay \$45,000 more for our coal than Cobourg or Brockville are required to do? Why \$30,000 more than Trenton, Deseronto, Nanapanoe or Kingston?

A leading business man of the city informs us that when he was in Ottawa, within the last month, he inquired the price of coal. He was told that the price for the best grade of nut and stove coal, delivered at the homes was ten dollars a ton. He was further told that much of this coal actually passed through Belleville on its way to Ottawa.

The problem of coal prices is the most important subject, in a financial way, that can engage our attention. Such topics as the saving of a few hundred dollars per annum in the operation of the gas or waterworks depart-

ments fade into utter insignificance when placed alongside the \$60,000 involved in the question of coal prices. Such a sum amounts to a large proportion of our entire city revenues. It would, in the course of a very short period of years, provide us with the wherewithal to procure a half-million dollar collegiate institute, permanent pavements for all our leading streets and a new bridge, of the most substantial kind, across the Bay of Quinte.

The trouble is that a large part of this money is being contributed by those who are driven to desperate straits to keep the wolf from the door or maintain their families in the plainest condition of decency. Upon them, wartime costs and exactions press with relentless harshness.

The poor laborer, with half-a-dozen little children, the wives and the dependants of those who have gone to fight our battles overseas,—these are the people we ought to consider and see to it that living conditions for them are made just as favorable as possible.

Unless there are the most substantial and incontrovertible reasons for the prices being charged for coal at Belleville, those prices are to the well-to-do citizen an injustice, to the poor citizen a cruel wrong.

**GERMANY'S JUST DECAY.**

Germany has always found cause for complacency in her census figures. Her population was increasing with surprising rapidity. The governing class figured on this increase to provide the necessary military and industrial material for world conquest.

How do matters stand now? Whether considered solely for Germany herself, or in relation to her enemies, there is an appalling loss of human resources. At least 3,000,000 Germans had been killed in the battle zone. These are not being replaced by the new generation. The birth rate has sunk so low that by next year it is estimated, the number of births will be 3,333,000 fewer than if there had been no war. Meanwhile mature and aged civilians have been dying off much more rapidly, owing to hardships imposed by war conditions. The annual number of deaths among the civilian population has increased by 1,000,000 over the normal.

Altogether it is figured that by next June the German empire, which should normally have had 72,000,000 people, will be reduced to no more than 64,500,000, or 7,500,000 less than if the war had not occurred. There will be 5 per cent. less population than there was when the war began, and 10 per cent. less than there would have been if the war had not occurred.

Austria-Hungary is in worse plight. Austria will have next year 3 per cent. less population than she had in 1914, and 11 per cent. less than she would have had without the war. Hungary will have lost 9 per cent. of what she had and 13 per cent. of what she would have had normally.

The major allies show up surprisingly well in comparison. Definite French figures are not available; but France is known to have no larger percentage of battle losses than Germany, and to have fared much better with regard to civilian mortality and birth rate. The British population has actually grown; by the middle of 1919 it will be only 3 per cent. lower than it would have been without the war. As for the United States, the war has not yet in any degree checked its normal rate of growth.

It should not be forgotten that Germany's chief losses have been her strongest ablest manhood. Even if she ends the war without a crushing military and political disaster, she will have made her national labors and world-prospects incalculably harder, because of all the millions she has thrown away. It is possible that having started the war as the most virile nation of Europe, she will end it a decadent nation, with waning energy and blasted prospects. If she does, it will be exactly what she deserves.

**GERMANY AND AUSTRIA.**

Europe has not yet lost interest in the discussion of peace overtures of the Austrian Emperor Charles to France when attention is turned to the new military alliance which the German war lords are forcing on Austria-Hungary. This convention has startled those German people who thought it was the business of soldiers to fight and of statesmen to determine international relations. In this case the diplomatic control is taken by the generals and the ministers are left with the nominal task of ratification.

But if there is criticism in Germany much more is there dismay in the Double Empire. Austria has seen herself annexed diplomatically to Germany and learns now that the military annexation which has existed during the war is proposed for the next twenty years. If the terms are correctly stated they contemplate the establishment of a permanent military system dominated by Germany, which requires that the "parties shall employ the entire strength of their people for military purposes,"

and shall "divert all their care to have their armies enter into any eventual conflict fully prepared and at the maximum of their strength."

Such is the version which a German paper gives of the conditions of the alliance. We are not yet compelled to accept it as literally exact, but there is no doubt that Austria is invited, in a manner which makes the invitation a demand, to accept Germany military domination and direction, not for the period of the war only but for the future. It is also clear from recent deliveries of the Kaiser, the chancellor and the admirals and generals, as well as from what is taking place in Russia, that Germany is laying plans to gather up and consolidate the gains that she hopes to make, and which the government wishes the people to believe she has already made in this war.

How far the Emperor and his ministers feel assured of ultimate victory and of the dictation of terms of peace can not be known. Their policy is to make the most confident showing to the people. But every day they are increasing their prediction of the gains the Empire is to make. It is always put forward now that Belgium must remain German, that the mineral country of France now occupied will be added to the conquest of 1871, that Baltic Russia will be retained, that Britain, France and Belgium must give up colonies to Germany, and that Germany must have an establishment in Asia. Such are the prospects held out to the German people to reconcile them to the slaughter of their men that has happened and the greater loss that they know to be impending.

There is little comfort or glory in all this for the races that are subject to the weak Emperor of Austria, helpless ward of the Kaiser. Whether Charles tried to do one thing by himself when he wrote to his relative to open up peace discussions with France and Britain, to the exclusion of Italy or whether this was a secret little Berlin intrigue with the purpose of provoking Italy into suspicion of her allies, is a question on which inquest is still held. If it was a spasm of Charles he has made his apologies to the master and obtained a respite. But Germany is taking care that Vienna shall be properly restrained hereafter by such conventions as are now proposed.

It is not an Austrian peace but a German peace that the war lords are after. Austria-Hungary can make nothing out of this war. Moreover it is a peace which shall leave Germany in a position to continue her program of military domination and to establish herself as the super-race and super-nation on the face of the earth. She hopes to have given the world such an exhibition of force and horror, of pitiless slaughter and remorseless destruction, that the name of Germany will for this generation be a terror and warning to the world, her allies as well as her enemies.

All this aspiration is as plain to the Allies as it is to the Huns. They know what they are fighting. They need no longer go back to the origin of the war to defend their cause and justify their presence in the field. In these four years Germany has taken off her mask. She has made it absolutely impossible that there should be any compromise. We know now what sort of master we shall have if Germany is not beaten. As a consequence of that knowledge and the duty it imposes Germany shall assuredly be beaten.

Since the war began the price of washing has at least doubled in Paris. Now the public has been warned by the Washwomen's Union that a 20 per cent. increase is to be added to

present rates. The vast majority of washwomen take their work to the lavoirs, where they rent tubs, driers and the like at so much a day. The lavoirs, or public wash houses, which used to charge a 10 cent fee, now charge 20. The driers, which used to be rented for 6 cents, now are 10. The water rate used to be a sou, now it is two. Soap and blue and the like are in the same proportion. Further, many of the women who used to do this work now prefer to work in munition factories.

By throwing huge gas shells behind the lines the Germans forced the French to evacuate miles of territory between Rheims and Soissons. Gas masks enable soldiers to stand their ground for a short time, but they cannot live more than four or five hours in positions filled with poisonous fumes. Gas masks contain charcoal and other materials which absorb such gases from the air which passes through these filters into the wearers' lungs. When the filters have taken their fill, the gas masks become useless and the men have to make a dash for purer air. Charcoal from coconut shells makes the best gas filter yet discovered, but its capacity to absorb gas is not unlimited. As far as can be judged at present, the gas shells used by the Allies are not so effective as those of the enemy, says The New York Commercial. While gas shells have been fired ever since the early days of the war, the intensive use of them in this drive, as described, seems to be a surprise, which, taken with the use of tanks to establish machine gun batteries, accounts for the comparative ease with which the Germans have won their way to the Marne on the old road to Paris. Gas shells are now doing the work performed by high explosive shells early in the war. Shrapnel and high explosive shells have no after-effects, but heavy gases cling to the ground and make positions untenable until a strong wind dissipates the poisonous vapors.

**THE SACRIFICE**

Dear little lad, with the hazel eyes,  
Veiled by drifts of the purest snow,  
I sit by the side of your baby-bed,  
And watch your dream-smile come and go,  
Pure as a bud at the breast of spring,  
Gay as the sprites in a fairy ring,  
Back you drift from your dream of joy  
Dear wee baby, my darling boy!

Gay little lad, with the chubby legs,  
Kissed by the sun to a ruddy brown,  
I wait in the grass, by the daisy field,  
And watch you pirating up and down,  
Light as a moth on its silken wing,  
Glad as the song the robins sing,  
Here you come with your plundered gold  
Wild little rover, sailor bold!

Dear big lad, with the earnest eyes,  
Lit by the light of a spirit true,  
I wait by the side of the dusty street,  
And watch the soldiers marching through:  
Proud as the light in an eagle's eye,  
Strong as the flight he wings on high—  
Oh, come back to your mother, old,  
Dear brave laddie, my soldier, bold!

Poor big lad, with the stalwart form,  
Bowed and mangled, and rent with pain,  
I sit by the side of your snowy bed,  
And watch your dream-swept face again,  
Weak, as a babe at its mother's breast,  
Spent as a reed, that the storm hath press'd  
Back you've come from the dream of strife  
Poor brave laddie, a baby for life!

—Written for The Ontario by Elsie Clough, Kingston, Ont.

**Other Editor's Opinions**

**"PRACTICALLY UNANIMOUS SUPPORT"**

Addressing the Bay of Quinte Methodist Conference at Lindsay, the retiring president, Rev. W. B. Tucker, B.A., B.D., condemned all who found fault with the Government and added this remarkable statement:

"We rejoice at the formation of a Union Government for Canada, which so commanded the confidence of the best elements in both great political parties of the past that, save in Quebec and the Maritime Provinces, it receives a practically unanimous support from press, platform, pulpit and poll."

It is regrettable that one of the leaders of a Christian church in his district, who, presumably, is anxious that righteousness and truth shall prevail in this country, should take it upon himself to make such a statement at a gathering of churchmen assembled to consider church business and religious, not political, missions.

Practically unanimous support at the polls! Surely Mr. Tucker must have known, if he took any interest in the election, that around 200,000 persons in Ontario alone voted against

the Union Government, and Ontario was its stronghold. Can anyone say truthfully then, that support for it was "practically unanimous"?

It is distressing enough when a minister of the gospel denounces those who criticize the Government for breaking promises and overriding acts of Parliament by order-in-Council, but it is even more disheartening when he deliberately departs so far from the truth. One wonders what his audience thought.—London Advertiser.

**THE FARMERS' PROTEST AGAIN**

At a great meeting filling Massey Hall, last week, the farmers of Canada protested again against the operation of the amended Military Service Act. The motives of the farmers' protest, in view of the unanimity of their representatives from all the provinces, cannot be merely trivial and unworthy. If they were, it would still be the duty of the Government, in the general interest, to ally discontent and win the co-operation of so important an element of the people. Unfortunately, as the premier and three of the debate is that the farmers are

more severely dealt with here than in the United Kingdom. The British amendments proclaimed on April 24th, withdrew certificates of exemption granted by tribunals to men of 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23 years, except in the cases of doctors, colliers, stevedores and farmers in a lower category than grade one, which is equivalent to our grade A. But as the retention of any man whose retention is absolutely essential to the cultivation of a farm, provision is made that, if the County Agricultural Executive Committee in England or Wales, or the Board of Agriculture for Scotland, in Scotland are satisfied that a man is a highly skilled agricultural worker, whose time employed on a farm in farm work, and that he is irreplaceable and essential to the cultivation of the farm, an application for his exemption may be made to an appeal tribunal.

Had that provision instead of the uncertain reference of cases of extreme hardship to commanding officers of depots, been incorporated in the Canadian order-in-Council, friction with the farmers would have been greatly reduced, if not avoided Toronto Weekly Sun.

**3,000,000 U. S. Troops by August**

Washington, June 19.—Three million Americans will be under arms by August 1 the Senate Committee was told by Provost Marshall Crowder. Gen. Crowder said that 1,347,000 men placed in Class 1 already have been called to the colors.

He estimated that some 400,000 additional men for the first class will be obtained from the men who registered June 5, and that another 200,000 will be added by the reclassification of men in the re-examination of the questionnaires now being made.

Gen. Crowder also indicated it will be necessary to go into Class 2 next year unless the draft law is amended so as to bring older men within its scope. The ages 18 to 49 have been proposed.

Gen. Peyton C. March, chief of staff, stated in a conference with newspaper men that there are now more than 800,000 American troops in France, including all branches of the service.

**May Adopt Decimal System**

ENGLAND SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING ABANDONING ITS CURRENCY IN FAVOR OF SIMPLICITY

England may adopt the decimal system for its currency. The agitation for this reform appears to be gaining favor with the British people, and among the important agencies behind the movement is the Associated Chamber of Commerce of the United Kingdom. For generations schoolboys have been learning this: Four farthings make one penny, twelve pence make one shilling, twenty shillings make one pound, twenty-one shillings sterling make one guinea, twenty shillings sterling make one sovereign.

Then there are the symbols to learn—the capital "L" with a short line across the shaft of the letter for the Latin "libra," or pound; the little "s" for shilling, of the Latin solidus; the little "d" for denarius, or penny; and the "qr" for quadrans, or quarter of a penny, standing for farthing though latterly "far" came to stand generally for farthing. All Canadian schoolboys have studied the table of English money in that part of their arithmetic dealing with "reduction," which is the changing of numbers, either simple or compound, from one denomination to another without altering their values. Many men will probably remember that as boys they worked and labored over two kinds of "reduction," which were called "reduction ascending and reduction ascending."

The decimalizing of English money is, of course, in the line of simplification. Some of the financial powers and papers are urging that Parliament take the matter under consideration and it is likely to come up for official treatment and discussion any time.

**COUGHED UP STOLEN DIAMOND**

After Detectives Taylor and Armstrong had made a vain search through the clothes of Wilbert Trouton, an employee of the Aberdeen Hotel, for a diamond he was supposed to have stolen from Thomas Fitzgerald, he coughed up the diamond which he had hidden under his tongue, dropped out on the floor.

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