

still meets there, the executive office has been moved to Toronto. Three of the old banks have been absorbed by larger institutions. In one case an Act of Parliament was obtained, not without considerable hostility, for the removal of the headquarters to Montreal. While the people of the several cities mentioned viewed these changes with regret they had to recognize that they were rendered necessary by the changing business conditions of the country. That local pride will be somewhat wounded by the change at Ottawa is natural, but there is no good reason why the financial needs of the Ottawa valley should not be well served by the united banks. Sentiment is not to be despised. It is to be respected. But wherever it comes into conflict with business the latter is likely to prevail.

## Secrecy of the Conference

IT is surprising that so many people, journalists chiefly, allowed themselves to entertain the belief that the days of "secret diplomacy" were over, and that in the case of the great Peace Conference at Paris the meetings were to be held with open doors. Perhaps a reference by President Wilson in his "fourteen points" had something to do with this. But men who had any proper conception of the responsibilities that rest on those in charge of great affairs should have known that the opening of the Conference to the press representatives was an impossibility. If men who are called together to confer on matters of large importance cannot meet and talk in confidence they might as well stay at home. Whether it be in public affairs or in private affairs, confidential discussion is an essential feature if there is to be any hope of satisfactory conclusions. The denunciations of secret diplomacy and the demand for an open Conference were foolish efforts to cater to the thoughtless. Face to face with the business on hand, the delegates at the Conference, even President Wilson and his colleagues, have had the good sense to decide that the deliberations shall be private. There is a pretence of an open Conference, but it is only a pretence. The formalities of the opening meeting were public and occasionally, when there is nothing to debate, the pressmen will be admitted. But the real business of the Conference will be considered, as it should be, with closed doors. The memorandum concerning this, issued by the preparatory Conference gives reasons for secrecy that are unanswerable. Of course, there is an outcry against the decision. The American journalists seem to be the most indignant. With the object, apparently, of breaking the force of the blow to them, Mr. Lansing, the American Secretary of State and a delegate to the Conference, has given out the following statement:

"The American policy is that fullest publicity consistent with the rapid and satisfactory discharge of important business which must come before the Peace

Congress should be accorded. It is possible that sessions should be open when business is advanced to a point where it can be regarded as ready for final action. It may be, however, that in the earlier stage, when subjects are being discussed between groups, or in committees, or in meetings of all the delegates, with a purpose of reaching agreements on controversial phases, it would be inadvisable to conduct these discussions openly. There might never be an agreement otherwise.

"That would not be secret diplomacy in any sense, however, for no agreement so arranged could be effective until approved by all the delegates in open session."

Let us hope that Mr. Lansing's smooth words may placate the wrathful correspondents. But really there is nothing new in them. His statement amounts to a declaration that the old and necessary policy will be adhered to, that the Conference will hold its meetings privately and give out what it pleases. His suggestion that an agreement arranged privately might have to be "approved by all the delegates in open session" is one that he may have difficulty in living up to. But if such a procedure were adopted it would simply mean that the "open session" would be held, not for discussion, but merely to make a record of a conclusion that had been reached after debate within closed doors. There would be no useful "publicity" in such a procedure.

## Two Good Things

TWO recent announcements of the Minister of Militia are deserving of much praise. One is that the proposed gratuity to the returned soldier on discharge, previously fixed at three months' pay, shall be increased and so graduated that the men of longest service shall receive six months' pay and allowances. The time of demobilization is an anxious one for the returned soldier. For months and years he has been serving in a capacity in which he had to think of nothing but obedience to orders and the maintenance of his military efficiency; all else came to him as the result of plans and arrangements made for him. Suddenly he finds that all that is ended, and he has to look out for himself. He must find, as soon as he can, something to do. He may not find it immediately. The allowance made to him on his discharge will enable him to take time to consider what his next step shall be, and he will face the problems of the future with greater confidence than he could with an empty pocket.

The other very commendable thing is the decision of the Department to provide for the expenses of the home-coming not only of the soldier, but also of his dependents. In some cases soldiers' wives went overseas to be near their husbands. Many soldiers married in Europe. The expense of bringing wives and children to Canada would be a heavy burden

for most of the soldiers. The determination of the Department to bear this expense will be generally approved. There is everywhere in Canada a disposition to see that generous treatment is accorded to the men who are returning from a war in which they and their comrades who gave their lives did so much honor to Canada. In these two recent announcements we are sure the Minister has given expression to the desire of the Canadian people.

These things will cost much money. They will be a considerable addition to our already heavy war expenditure. But the people will not grudge money applied to such laudable purposes.

## Russia

THE situation in Russia is one of the most difficult problems which the Peace Conference faces. A couple of weeks ago quite a sensation was caused by the statement in a Paris journal that the British Government had proposed that representatives of the Bolsheviks be admitted to the Peace Conference, and that the proposal had been warmly rejected by the French Government. Premier Clemenceau and his Foreign Minister, Mr. Pichon, indignantly declared that they would have no truck or trade with the Bolsheviks. Public opinion seemed to be for the moment with the French statesmen and against the action of the British Government. A quick change has taken place in Paris. On the motion of President Wilson the Conference unanimously agreed to a movement which differed little from what Mr. Lloyd George had proposed. The Conference did not invite the Bolsheviks to come, but it agreed to send a deputation to meet them. The President's proposal, accepted by the Conference, was that an invitation be sent to all the Russian sections, including the Bolsheviks, to attend a meeting on the 15th of February on Princes Island, in the Sea of Mar-mora.

Whether the desired meeting can be brought about is doubtful. Some of the Russians who are most hostile to the Bolsheviks, feeling as Mr. Clemenceau did, are unwilling to sit at any table with the Lenine-Trotsky men. One can sympathize with the feeling that leads them to take this attitude. But it is not easy to overlook the fact that the Bolsheviks seem to be the most powerful party in Russia. There is a very proper and natural reluctance on the part of all the Allies to engaging in a war against Russia. If they have to wage war against the Bolsheviks it will call for large military forces, and where are they to be found? The attempt to bring all the Russian factions together, and to induce them to see the need of a stable government, may succeed. There is a possibility that even the Bolsheviks will by this time see the folly of their course, and be willing to come to some reasonable agreement. But if the effort fails, the Allies will be all the stronger for having given this evidence of their sincere desire to assist Russia to re-establish herself among the nations.