

Cabinet Crisis

A serious split in the Federal Cabinet has arisen over the question of using draftees for overseas service. The resignation of the Defence Minister, Mr. J. L. Ralston, has been accepted by Premier King, and General A. G. L. McNaughton, former commander-in-chief of the Canadian Army, has been appointed in his place. Thus comes to the surface the strong undercurrent of feeling that has been seething in Ottawa for a long time. In fact, ever since the beginning of the war there has been a direct cleavage of opinion, in high Government circles as well as among the electorate, on this controversial issue. A house divided against itself cannot stand; this is a consideration of such primary importance that sooner or later it had to be disposed of.

The Hon. J. L. Ralston returned only a week or two ago from the battlefronts of Europe, where he personally investigated conditions at first hand and discussed the military requirements with those actually on the spot. If he is convinced of the necessity for sending reinforcements overseas from the home defence forces, he undoubtedly performs a courageous national service when he backs up his conviction by action involving political sacrifice on his part. He is by no means alone in his opinions, there being rumours to the effect that his course of action is likely to be followed by several other members of the Cabinet, including Naval Minister Angus Macdonald, Finance Minister Ilsley, Secretary of State McLarty and others. Whether these rumours are substantiated or not, it is evident that the Prime Minister is confronted with a serious political crisis, which will call for prompt and radical action.

General McNaughton's appointment as Minister of Defence is not, in our opinion, a wise one. General McNaughton's attitude on this vital question is well known; he has consistently opposed any suggestion that the draftees should be employed for anything else than protecting the homeland against possible invasion. Even now, when the prospect of any such invasion has gone, he obstinately holds to his wasteful policy, in the face of the strongest evidence of its ineffectiveness. The men on active service, who are doing such a magnificent job on the firing-lines, supported, it is true, by their gallant comrades the Poles, Czechs, Italians and others of foreign blood, may well ask why it is that 70,000 Canadian draftees are exempted from making their proper patriotic contribution to this "all-out" national war effort.

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