

names, and of these only a company of 250 men had been actually enrolled — this out of a population of 250,000,000 British subjects in India! As I have said, the Indian regiments which have been serving abroad for so long in East Africa ought to be relieved without delay, and doubtless some of the regiments in Mesopotamia as well. Every day questions are asked in this House about the men who have, perhaps, been a year and a half away being given leave from France, but the India troops feel the prolonged absence from their homes much more, and some thought should be given to them as well. Taking all these things into consideration, I do hope that the Government will seriously consider this question of increasing our man-power, and will no longer delay to make the utmost use of all men available throughout the whole of the Empire.

Mr. LEES SMITH: I wish to raise the case of an individual officer which has some connection with the subject which the hon. Member for Haggerston raised. It is the case of Second-Lieutenant Sassoon, of the 3rd Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers. This young officer, I think, appears to have one of the finest and most gallant records of service in the Army. He enlisted as a private — without waiting for the War to break out — on 3rd August, 1914, and I imagine would be one of the first 1,000 men to enlist. He has been wounded, and has been awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry. He has received formal recognition from the General Commanding for distinguished service in the field. About three weeks ago this young officer came to see me, and told me he had written this letter to his commanding officer. The Under-Secretary will see that this letter raises the question of policy which has to be considered in the light of the treatment which is meted out to those soldiers who break up meetings. It raises a question of policy, and why there should be differentiation of treatment between soldiers who hold one set of opinions and those who hold another. The writer says:

I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe that the War is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it. I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this War, upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest. I believe that the purposes for which I and my fellows soldiers entered upon this War would have been so clearly stated as to have made it impossible to change them, and that, had this been done, the objects which actuated us would now be attained by nego-

tiation. I have seen and endured the sufferings of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolonging those sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust. I am not protesting against the conduct of the War, but against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed. On behalf of those who are suffering now, I make this protest against the deception which has been practised upon them; also I believe that it may help to destroy the callous complacency with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realise.

This young officer asked me if I would follow up his case and, if necessary, bring it to the notice of the House. What he anticipated has occurred. After some delay he was forced to appear before a medical board, and the board, having heard the opinions he had expressed in the letter, informed him that he must be suffering from the effects of a passing nervous shock due to his terrible experiences at the front. He was sent to a hospital for officers suffering from shell shock and other minor ailments. I read that letter, because I think, however profoundly hon. Members may disagree from it, that it contains no indication whatever of having been written by a man suffering from any kind of nervous shock. This young officer is known to Members of this House. I myself had a long interview with him only a few weeks ago, and he certainly impressed me as a man of most unusual mental power and most extraordinary determination of character. The fact is, that the decision of the medical board is not based upon health, but based upon very easily understood reasons of policy.

It was quite clear that it was the easiest way to avoid publicity. I think it was also based upon reasons of personal kindness. This was a very popular and distinguished young officer, and the medical board was only too ready to believe that this letter could only be written by someone suffering from nervous shock. But the evidence is the letter, and I really do not think that any impartial person would say that that letter is any evidence at all. As a matter of fact, this officer had been in this country for three months, and it had never occurred to a soul that he was showing evidence of nervous shock until he wrote the letter.

I raise this question at this moment for the reason that it raises the question of what policy the War Office is going to adopt towards those who break the King's Regulations. During the whole period