

Wednesday, February 10th, 1915.

**THE
 Worthing Gazette.
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 FROM OUR STANDPOINT.
 WORTHING WANTS TO RETAIN
 THE TROOPS.**

THE Standing Orders of the Town Council would seem to be of a sufficiently comprehensive nature to cover all possible contingencies, for the regulations are no fewer than sixty-six in number. The thirty-fifth among them declares that if the MAYOR or CHAIRMAN at any Council meeting shall be of opinion that any motion or business proposed to be made or transacted is of an objectionable character, it shall be competent for him to refuse to allow it to be proceeded with. There is no suggestion that the motion which Councillor NEALE sought to induce his colleagues to accept last week was of an objectionable character, but the question of expediency most assuredly arose, and the majority are to be commended for their determination not to permit a discussion which might conceivably have had very mischievous effects from the point of view of the town in general. Whilst the MAYOR took upon himself to direct the attention of his colleagues to the significance of the situation, it was left to the Council as a whole to declare whether it was expedient or otherwise to persevere with the motion. That question was answered in the affirmative with a positiveness that left no possible doubt as to the feeling of the Council, and the action of the MAYOR was thus most completely affirmed. Alderman WHITE is far too experienced a representative of the public interests to venture upon any dictatorial course of action that would assuredly invite criticism; but he has the obvious advantage of strength of character, and we are sure that whilst he would not seek by an improper exercise of his authority to impose his will upon those whose deliberations he directs, he would never shrink from an exhibition of firmness, whatever the ultimate consequences might be, if he felt that the public interests demanded it.

We decline to believe that there is any widespread dissatisfaction with regard to the rate of payment made for the billeting of the soldiers who are now enjoying the hospitality of the town. That there may be a certain amount of discontent is only to be expected, for this is a phase of human nature with which our daily dealings makes us disagreeably familiar; but apart from some vague misgivings created by the statement that the rate of pay in Worthing is 2s. 6d. a day compared with 3s. 4d., with no explanation of the apparent differentiation of treatment, at other towns on the coast, it is generally agreed that this sum represents an extremely fair allowance in the circumstances. The obvious fact has to be faced that the cost of living has been appreciably enhanced since the War began; but, even making all due allowance for this highly important factor, all the evidence we have been able to accumulate tends to show that those with whom these representatives of the New Army are billeted are content with the War Office allowance. That the Military

Authorities are disposed to adopt a reasonable view of the situation is shown by their voluntary action this week, for in view of the increased cost of bread, flour, and other commodities they have made an addition of three-pence a day to the allowance paid for every soldier billeted locally. Since the last Monday in November Worthing has played the part of host to these soldiers in the making, and, reducing the position to monetary calculations, we are entitled to regard the association as having been worth fully £60,000 to the town. This is, we admit, an extremely conservative estimate, but it provides us with a workable basis, and shows how valuable is the retention of the Troops.

Two alternatives have presented themselves to the Military Authorities. One was to revert to the system, adopted locally for a few days only, of making Military provision for the feeding, and thus paying only for the lodging and attendance; and the other, the more drastic course of taking the Troops away altogether. Neither course could be regarded as acceptable to Worthing. In the first place the approximate expenditure of £8,000 a week would be most appreciably reduced, and the trade of the town would inevitably suffer; whilst in the other instance it would be a distinct deprivation to many householders who have warmly welcomed the advent of the soldiers into their houses, for they have thus been enabled to demonstrate their patriotism, whilst they have not been disposed to protest against the regulation rate of pay as inadequate. There are other towns, such as Littlehampton, which have striven hard for a share of the Military patronage, so that the possibility of a withdrawal of the soldiers is certainly by no means remote. We know the value which the past ten weeks' friendly occupation of the town has proved to the community; we feel that the great bulk of the householders upon whom the soldiers are billeted are far from discontented with the rate of payment; and we regret if any ill-founded complaints, however few and obscure they may be, should have imperilled Worthing's prospects of further participation in the circulation of some thousands of pounds a week at a time when it is obviously so peculiarly acceptable.