

battlefields than the French Canadian soldier. Such a testimony from the mouth of our worst enemies can only delight us, as it can be but the voicing of a signal truth.

Mr. Speaker, had it been possible, had we not wanted to remain French Canadians, had we lost our senses to the extent of agreeing to sacrifice the work of many centuries of painful efforts, you would now all be convinced that the blood which flows through the veins of the soldier of the glorious 22nd is the same blood which flows through the veins of the French Canadian lad.

But we are reproached with having failed in the accomplishment of our duty during the war which has just been brought to an end. Why such a reproach when we are well satisfied that the Government left no stone unturned in order to prevent the French Canadians from enlisting? We are entirely satisfied, and I say it with the utmost frankness, that the Government would have been pleased and would have preferred it if French Canadians had taken a different stand, so as to enable them to stir racial prejudices. I do not wish to review the circumstances of the whole organization at the beginning of the war.

The facts were already stated during the last session, and I shall be content with placing before this House and the country what occurred in my own county at the time and what were the results. An officer was sent to Chicoutimi to secure volunteers and opened an office there. In Chicoutimi as everywhere else, I regret to say, there are men either lazy or idle, very few, but still there are some, and in the best families you will often find all kinds of individuals. Well, those who would not work, the lazy ones, were unfortunately the first to enlist. Some highly respectable young men belonging to good families, would have liked to serve, but knowing as they did that they would be compelled to live for a certain length of time in company with this sort of people, they hung back. Therefore the people of Chicoutimi who were anxious to see the county do, not its duty, for we did not consider it compulsory, but its share as the other sections of the country, in recruiting the largest possible number of young men, started an agitation with a view to securing from the Government permission to have the recruiting done by the 18th regiment of Chicoutimi and by the officers of that regiment who were well acquainted with all the youth of that country around Chicoutimi and Lake St. John. Mr. Girard, former member for the consti-

[Mr. Savard.]

tuency, was requested to apply to the military authorities on behalf of the citizens. But that was during the election of Dorchester, in which Mr. Girard was taking an active part. At any rate, four or five weeks elapsed or perhaps more, before Mr. Girard acknowledged receipt of the request. And we heard no more about it. Recruiting proceeded as usual; however, we were surprised to see how many young men from the parishes in the counties of Chicoutimi, Lake St. John and Saguenay, were enlisting under most unfortunate circumstances. To day a great number of them are resting for ever in French ground. Therefore I say that we have done our duty and more than our duty.

Now allow me, Sir, to refer to the Military Service Act. We had every reason to be opposed to that law. I do not intend to enumerate them all, and as everybody knows, when the Act became law we submitted to it and, with very few exceptions, all those who were called reported for duty. I sincerely declare, Sir, that I personally do not know a single young man who did not report immediately in conformity with the requirements of the Military Service Act. In our part of the country there are no unemployed, and as the Act provided for exemptions, most of our young men were temporarily exempted.

Later on the exemptions were nullified either by an Order in Council or by decisions of Hon. Justice Duff, and then the young men were called upon to report. The people of Chicoutimi-Saguenay were in a very awkward position. As I have already stated, there are no unemployed in that county. It was established to the satisfaction of the Courts—and Hon. Judge Duplessis could confirm what I say—that we were and are still lacking at least 30 or 35 per cent of the necessary labour to carry on our industries. The situation was a difficult one.

You remember, Mr. Speaker, that last spring, the hon. Minister of Agriculture called a conference of the Ministers of Agriculture of the various Provinces in Ottawa, in order to find means of increasing the production, and you also know that a subsidy was given to the Provinces for that purpose. I have much pleasure in saying that the Province of Quebec was the only one who not only reached its quota but exceeded it by several thousand acres, and I take pride in stating that the county of Lake St. John was leading all the counties of that province.