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NATIONAL SERVICE.

The opening of 1917 marks the inauguration of a new stage in the concentration of Canadian effort upon the business of winning the war. The National Service scheme is being steadily pushed forward. That scheme, however, can only become a complete success through the whole-hearted co-operation of the public at large, through the general action of individuals in filling up the cards. To some extent, undoubtedly, the scheme has been prejudiced by the fear in some quarters, that it is the thin edge of the wedge in the matter of conscription—a fear which some military men lacking discipline and swashbuckling militarists with essentially Prussian ideas have done their best to accentuate through stupid utterances on the platform and in the press. Sir Robert Borden's explicit and straightforward statement to the labour leaders should have a good effect in this connection, although rumour and prejudice are notoriously difficult to overcome. Careful thought on this subject will probably lead to the conclusion, we suggest, that in an individualistic democracy such as is Canada, conscription, whatever the letter of the law may be, can only be enforced by general consent. Otherwise to enforce it, would lead to weakness instead of increased strength.

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Through National Service, it is hoped to be able to effect a greater concentration of men upon the work of winning the war. Steps are also being taken with this New Year to effect a greater concentration in resources. While naturally, no authoritative information is available in regard to this matter, it appears to be the fact that the British authorities are looking increasingly to Canada for munitions and supplies and that approximately, orders are only limited by our capacity to produce and deliver on time. This is not merely a sentimental preference by the British authorities. The fact that our banks are willing and able to advance funds to finance the British Government's requirements, without asking for collateral security has at least something to do with it. The fact that these funds when distributed are kept within the British Empire and, after their distribution become again available for war financing is another reason for this preference. It was intimated this week that Canadian railways are considering a reduction in passenger train service in order to free motive power and train crews for the more rapid transport of munitions and army supplies. This is a case in point of a practical economy, leading to greater concentration upon war efforts. Sir Thomas White, too, has begun this week his new campaign for national saving. There is perhaps a good deal to be said for the opinion that in view of our social likeness to the United States, that the only effective method of promoting national saving at the present time is by prohibiting imports of luxuries and by enlarging the present scale of taxation. The fact is, however, that a National Savings Campaign has not yet been tried, and it is as yet unknown how wage-earners and those of little means will respond to any facilities afforded them for investing small savings in war securities issued especially to meet their requirements. Such an experiment has been a triumphant success in England, and there is no obvious reason why it should not be a success here, if energetically administered. But undoubtedly also, such a scheme needs to be accompanied by increased taxation upon those who can best afford to pay it, if the New Year is to see the most effective concentration in National Service of Canada's material resources.

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It is a matter of some satisfaction that those interests with which this journal is especially connected, the banks, insurance companies and loan corporations have been leaders in National Service since war broke out, and will, undoubtedly, continue that leadership during 1917. They have shown their leadership as well by the large proportion of their staffs who have joined the Colours as by the way in which they have shaped their operations in order to concentrate all their available energies upon National Service in war financing. The remarkable achievement of the banks in National Service is well known—their wise guidance of the economic fabric of the Dominion at a most critical time; their long-sighted and patriotic launching out upon new tasks in the financial support of Great Britain. The accomplishment of the insurance companies is perhaps less recognized. Yet the fire companies have continued, undisturbed by the economic cataclysm, to guard industry and commerce as well as private wealth, from the risks of individual financial disaster arising from fire, so conserving individual resources and energies. The life companies have made it possible for thousands who have not been able to buy war bonds themselves, to have the satisfaction of contributing to the financial support of the war through the mere payment of their premiums, new funds having been very largely employed by the companies in the purchase of war securities. Through their agents, the life companies also give the opportunity to him who is able to increase during 1917 his financial support of the Allied cause. Saving money, whether to buy bonds or to purchase additional insurance, is not the least way in which National Service can be rendered during this year.