

exercised Parliament should be summoned to deal with the question, and within what time. The power to send our citizens enrolled in the militia outside Canada for the defence thereof, was fully conceded in the debate, and the construction placed upon the measure at that time was as I have already indicated.

I repeat that this measure merely accepts and acts on a principle which has been embodied in our law for almost half a century, and which recognizes an equal obligation on all citizens for the defence of their country. There is an equal obligation but, under present conditions there cannot be an equal sacrifice. No sacrifice made hereafter can be as great as that of those who have already gone to the front, some of whom have fallen, and many of whom have already been in the trenches for two years.

It has been said of this Bill that it will induce disunion, discord, and strife, and that it will paralyze the nation's effort. I trust that this prophecy may prove unfounded. Why should strife be induced by the application of a principle which was adopted at the very inception of Confederation?

All citizens are entitled to equal protection of the laws, and upon them is imposed an equal obligation. There can be no national unity unless this principle is accepted. I cannot bring myself to believe that any class or community will expect to assert for itself the right or the power to defy the law, and to set up for itself different standards from those which are applied to the people as a whole.

It was my strong desire to bring about a union of all parties for the purpose of preventing any such disunion or strife as is apprehended. That effort was an absolutely sincere one, and I do not regret that it was made, although the delay which it occasioned may have given opportunity for increased agitation and for excitement arising from misunderstanding. I went so far as to agree that this Bill should not become effective until after a general election, in the hope that by this means all apprehension would be allayed, and that there might be a united effort to fulfil the great national purpose of winning this war. What may be necessary or expedient in that regard, I am yet willing to consider, for ever since this war began I have had one constant aim and it was this: to throw the full power and effort of Canada into the scale of right, liberty and justice for the winning of this war, and to maintain the unity of the Canadian people in that effort.

But I cannot shrink, and I will not shrink, from the determination to support and sustain the Canadian troops now at the front. It is said that the consequences of this measure are to be dreaded. Why they should be dreaded I cannot understand, for it introduces no new principle. I should rather be concerned as to what may ensue if this Bill is not passed. The legislation of 1868 and 1904 was not mere stage play; it was a serious measure with a serious purpose. The conditions which it calls for have surely been fulfilled. God speed the day when the gallant men who are protecting and defending us will return to the land they love so well. Only those who have seen them at the front can realize how much they do love this dear land of Canada. If we do not pass this measure, if we do not provide reinforcements, if we do not keep our plighted faith, with what countenance shall we meet them on their return? They have seen their friends and comrades discoloured and gasping from poison gas at Ypres. They have known what it means to have regiments decimated, to see comrades and brothers struck down. They have held on grimly in the trenches in the Ypres salient and elsewhere against overwhelming numbers and under the devastating power of the enemy's artillery when we lacked guns and munitions. They have climbed the heights of the Vimy Ridge and driven the Germans far beyond it. They have answered the call of service and duty, they have fought and died that Canada might live and that the horrors and desolation of war might never be known within our borders. They went forth splendid in their youth and confidence. They will come back silent, grim, determined men, who not once or twice but fifty times have gone over the parapet to seek their rendezvous with death. If what are left of 400,000 such men come back to Canada with fierce resentment, and even rage in their hearts, conscious that they have been deserted and betrayed, how shall we meet them when they ask the reason? I am not so much concerned for the day when this Bill becomes law, as for the day when these men return if it is rejected. It is easy to sow the wind of clamour against the imposition of equal duty and obligation upon all Canadians for the preservation of their country; but those who make that sowing may reap such a whirlwind as they do not dream of to-day.

I hope that this measure will be received by the House and by the country