

be brought within that category and class. I should further emphasize this consideration; that in the enlistments which have taken place during the past year, and which I shall recount in a moment, a very considerable number of men have taken service in Railway Construction and Forestry battalions. These battalions serve a most useful and important purpose, but the number of men available for combatant service in Category "A" is necessarily cut down by enlistment in Railway Construction and Forestry units. The total enlistment during the year ending May 31, 1917, was 85,306. Of course, only a portion of these men were fit for Category "A", and as I have already pointed out, a considerable number enlisted for Railway Construction and Forestry service. During the same year our casualties amounted to 75,492. Our total casualties since the war began amount to 99,639. During April and May we enlisted 11,790 men and during these same two months our casualties were 23,939. During the next seven months we need enforcements to the number of at least 70,000 in order to keep four divisions in the field, and to keep five divisions in the field we need 84,000 men, in both cases principally infantry. Continued offensive operations, such as those of April and May, might increase this number, and if the offensive continues it is not too much to say that we must expect this.

What is the conclusion I have drawn from all this? It is, as I have said before, that reinforcements must be obtained or the divisions must dwindle; there is no alternative. The reinforcements now available will last for only a few months, the precise number of which, for military reasons, I am not at liberty to state. We all are proud that Canada has played a splendid and notable part in this war. The achievements of her troops have placed her in the very forefront of the nations, and the question before the House and the country to-day is this: Is Canada content to relax her efforts in the most critical period of a war which concerns her heritage, her status, and her liberty? I am confident that the answer of the House and the country will be the same, namely that Canada cannot and must not relax her effort.

It seems to me there is something more than this to be taken into account. Is there not, as I have already said in this House, an appeal from the men at the front? They have answered the call, they have given glorious service, they have put

aside all material considerations; duty alone has been their ideal. Unconscious of every thing other than the supreme task before them, I know from my personal experience that they cannot realize the thought that their country which so summoned them to her service will be content to desert and humiliate them. I bring from that splendid manhood of Canada at the front an earnest and thrilling message that we shall stand beside them in the stress and welter of this struggle, and bring them such support that the effort and sacrifice which have been consecrated to this supreme task shall not be in vain. When Canada called them to the colours her honour was pledged to this, and I shall do my best to see that the pledge is fulfilled. I never will be responsible for its violation.

Returning on May 14th, I announced on May 18th that the need must be met by applying a principle which, for forty-nine years, has been on the statute book of Canada. I repeat that: There is no principle of compulsion in the Bill which I have presented to this House, except the principle that has remained on the statute book of Canada for forty-nine years. Some people afflicted with a diseased imagination have asserted that I took my present course at the request or dictation of the British Government. No more absolute falsehood was ever uttered by human lips. The subject was never discussed between myself and any member of the British Government; if there had been any such suggestion from them I for one would not have tolerated it. The Government, Parliament and people of Canada are the only authorities that can deal with or determine questions such as those which are embodied in the Bill now presented to this House.

The principle of compulsory service in this Dominion was first enacted in 1868, under a government in which Sir George Etienne Cartier was Minister of Militia and Defence. It was re-enacted with a slight change in form, but no change in meaning, in 1904, by the Government of my right hon. friend (Sir Wilfrid Laurier). In order that there may be no question about this, it is appropriate that I should give a short review of what took place in 1868 and should also deal with the amendment made in 1904.

By the Militia Act of 1868, introduced by Sir George Etienne Cartier, it was enacted—(section 4)—as follows:

4. The militia shall consist of all the male inhabitants of Canada, of the age of eighteen years and upwards, and under sixty—not exempted or disqualified by law, and being British subjects by birth or naturalization;