

V.

Consider the question as one may it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that if the Military Service Act is knocked on the head by the people's vote on December 17 there must be a virtually complete stoppage of enlistment for a period of at least four or five months.

Even if, under the auspices of a government headed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier and kept in power by the elements in our population which are the special sources of his political strength, voluntary enlistments in large numbers were secured—as to which there is surely reasonable grounds for doubt—they could not become available for actual service in the field, taking into account the time necessary for training, during the military season of 1918.

If, as seems highly probable, the decisive crisis of the war is reached next year, the inevitable consequence of a decision by the people of Canada in favor of a party as against Union government will be that only those troops which Canada has already enlisted, sadly reduced in number by the casualties of the coming winter, will be available for that stern struggle in the field which may determine the fate of the world for a thousand years.

VI.

Equally disastrous and far-reaching might be the moral consequences of the rejection of Union Government by the people and their adoption of a cautious policy of expediency. This war is a test of civilian morale as well as of military efficiency. Behind the armies stand the peoples; if they break no valor in the field will avert defeat. It was civilian war-weariness in Russia that destroyed the power of the Russian armies at the front and placed in jeopardy the cause that had been almost won. The reaction of Russian unrest and discontent has been felt in every Allied nation; while it has strengthened Germany to persist in her programme of world domination through the might of the sword.

What would be the effect upon public opinion in Great Britain and the other British dominions, in the United States, in France and in Italy if on December 17 the news should be flashed around the world that the people of Canada had dismissed from office a Union War Government which had been formed for the express purpose of more vigorously prosecuting the war, and had gone to the people for ratification of their programme of compulsory military service?

The people of these lands—our allies—would say that Canada, one of the first to enter the field in defence of civilization, had grown weary of the war and had decided to quit. And they would be right! It would be a staggering blow to the morale of every Allied nation and a corresponding encouragement to Berlin.

VII.

These disasters can only come upon Canada through failure of the people to recognize the seriousness of the issue which they are now called upon to face. In words that seem to have been written for this very day de Tocqueville said:

"For a generation which is manifestly called upon to witness the stern and terrible changes of the constitutions of the empires of the earth, the deadliest sin is thoughtlessness, the most noxious food is prejudice, and the most fatal disease is party spirit."

From thoughtlessness, prejudice and party spirit the people of Canada must turn aside; and uniting one with another go forward in the path of duty and sacrifice with unflinching steps.