

Conscription Plan a Screen For Government Incompetency

No Need for Compulsion if Government Had Done Its Duty, Says E. M. MacDonald in Scathing Attack — A Pre-Election Measure

Ottawa, July 4.—That the resort to conscription was the government's method of seeking to cover up its own sins of omission and commission and was not necessary because of any real failure on the part of the people of Canada to measure up to the full requirements of war needs, was the gravamen of a strong indictment against the Borden administration presented to parliament today by E. M. MacDonald, of Pictou.

Mr. MacDonald's contribution to the conscription debate, was probably the most plain spoken and smashing general attack on governmental "weakness, inefficiency and incompetency" yet delivered by any of the opponents of the conscription bill. He reviewed the whole record of lethargic war administration, pointed to the things which had been done badly, charged graft, political favoritism, lack of proper organization and mobilization of the national resources to meet war conditions, declared that the conditions of the conscription bill itself exempted the rich and bore heavily on the poor, and drew the conclusion that the remedy for the falling off in recruiting lay rather in a change of administrative methods and the restoration of public confidence in governmental leadership than in an practicable resort to forced enlistment.

Mr. MacDonald's was the main speech of the day forecasting the general outline of criticism which the government will have to meet when it appeals to W. S. LOGGIE CRITICAL BUT FAVORS BILL.

Adoption of a different attitude with regard to conscription, although at the same time not minding in his criticism of the government's mistakes in handling recruiting and war organization generally, W. S. Loggie, a New Brunswick Liberal, with two sons and a daughter at the front, advanced one appealing plea for the bill. He quoted a sentence from a letter written by his soldier son to his sister, a nurse in France:

"What is the news regarding conscription and coalition? I am strong for conscription myself. What does father think of it?"

"That settled the issue for me," commented Mr. Loggie.

Two of the French-speaking members who spoke today came out frankly on the Canada-has-done-rough platform. Roch Lanctot, speaking from the Liberal side, protested against "driving Canada into bankruptcy for the sake of England." He made one unique suggestion, namely that the wealth of all millionaires who favored conscription should be conscripted, leaving them a mere pittance of \$100,000 to get along on. Millionaires who did not favor conscription, said Mr. Lanctot, might be exempted. That would test the loyalty of the rich who were shouting for conscription.

Joseph A. Desautels, speaking from the Conservative side in support of the Barrette amendment to kill the bill, put up the new argument that it was ultra vires for the dominion parliament to pass the conscription measure since the British North America Act gave no authority to the Canadian government to conscript subjects of Canada for service in Europe.

What of Daylight Saving?

Hon. Wm. Pugsley, in the house this afternoon, asked Sir George Foster what the government's proposals were regarding the daylight saving bill which has been given a first reading, and he thought that if it was to become effective this summer progress would have to be made at once. "The bill is not preventing us as rapidly as the summer," he said.

Sir George Foster replied that the debate on the military service bill had precedence and the daylight saving bill would follow in the wake of that measure.

The house went into committee of supply on a resolution by Sir Thomas White. He stated that he was to give out money voted and expired by an arrangement between Sir Robert Borden and Sir Wilfrid Laurier, supply for two further months would be granted.

The resolution was passed, and the bill based upon it given a first reading.

E. M. MacDonald, of Pictou, continued the debate on the conscription bill. He said that we should have our best energies so that we would play our part against the military despotism in Germany and second that we should keep peace at home and prevent discord.

Mr. MacDonald declared that all the forces of the country should have been mobilized long ago. He said the government should long ago have conferred with Great Britain as to the number of men for transportation and for building ships. There should have been a conference with the Allies as to the number of men we should furnish, having regard to our population and needs of the men at the front.

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