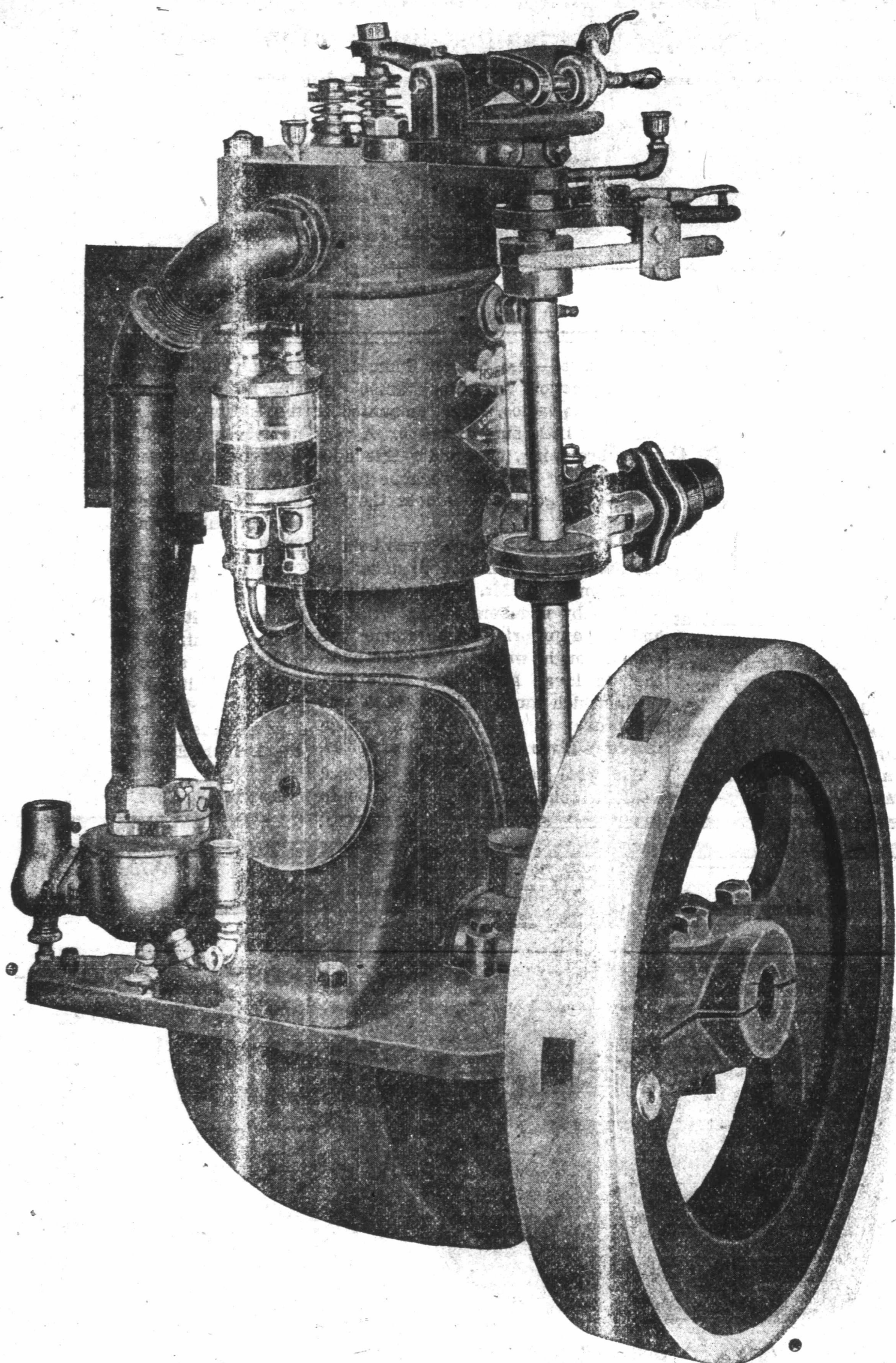


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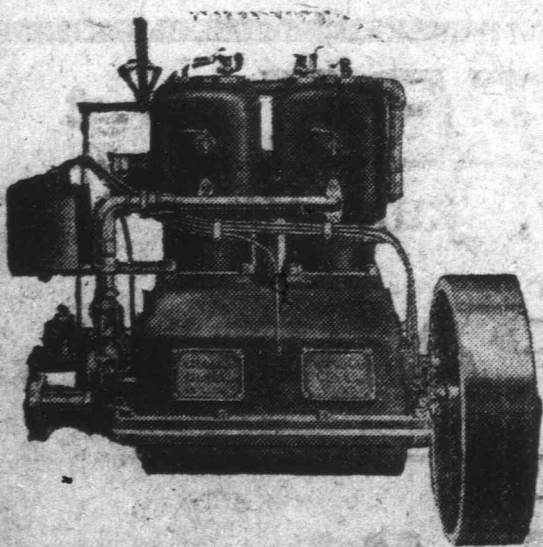
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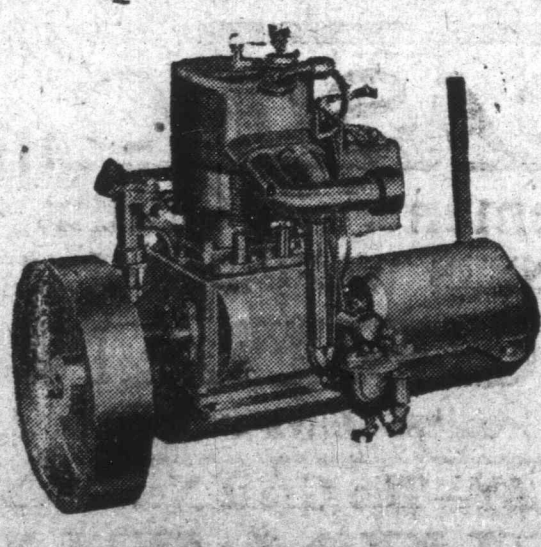
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## Lord Derby's Recruiting Scheme---Personal Experience of a Canvasser

**We Have Conscription of the Body---Must We Now Adopt Conscription of Property?**

By JAMES F. MUIRHEAD, in the Nation.

THIS appointment of Lord Derby on October 6 as a director-general of recruiting marked two definite changes in our methods of carrying on the war: (1) The abandonment of a casual, haphazard scheme of recruiting for one more systematic and scientific; and (2) a distinct recognition of the fact that the provision of men for the army ought to be separated from the task of equipping and managing them. It is conceivable, that a more logical nation would have envisaged these necessities from the very first; but it is also pretty clear that, Britishers being what they are, our Government would have made a serious mistake in trying to enforce them in advance of public opinion. In Lord Derby the occasion seems to have quite definitely found the man. He is a typical Britisher, of the Lancashire brand—a clear-headed, straight, blunt, businesslike person, full of good humor and good sense, indifferent to criticism and with an adequate comprehension of his fellow countrymen. Though he has filled a Ministerial office, was an excellent military censor in the Boer War, and is said to be one of the most efficient Parliamentary whips the Unionists ever had, he is yet best known as a successful sportsman—a member of the Jockey Club, a good shot, the owner of race-horses. Even his mistakes tend to endear him to his fellows; and his recent frank and unreserved apology to Lord Ribblesdale has only helped to increase his popularity. His direct and unmistakable language is a refreshing contrast to certain Parliamentary ambiguities with which we have lately been treated; and it certainly will not be his fault if any misapprehension remains as to any man's position towards the present canvass for recruits.

The general procedure of the Derby recruiting scheme may be briefly summarized as follows: The Mayor or other local authority is called upon to form a central committee for the prosecution of a canvass for recruits in the district over which he presides. The central committee appoints directors in each ward to carry on the actual house-to-house canvass, and these directors in turn procure the canvassers to do this. These canvassers are supplied with "white" cards, duplicating the "blue" cards furnished to the local committees by the War Office, and containing particulars as to all eligible men in their districts who have not yet enlisted; and it is their business to enter, in a space provided for the purpose, the replies of the canvassed men. The way of the canvassers was prepared by a letter addressed by Lord Derby to all eligible men, explaining the situation and appealing to their patriotism. From the results of this "white-card canvass" the military authorities will draw up lists, divided into forty-six groups, of men willing to enlist. The twenty-three groups of unmarried men, arranged according to age (from nineteen to forty), will be called up first. Then the corresponding groups of married men. Arrangements are made for consulting, so far as possible, the wishes of the men themselves, both as to the branches of the army they desire to join and as to their preference for immediately service with the colors or a place in the army reserve. Infantry are especially required, and preference will be given to married men for vacancies in the Royal Army Medical Corps and the Army Service Corps. Special local tribunals have been formed to hear the protests of those who think they have good reasons for not enlisting or for being relegated to a later group; but to get the advantage of these tribunals a man must have appeared for attestation before the military authorities.

An immediate effect of the promulgation of Lord Derby's scheme was the flocking of young men to the recruiting offices before the canvass actually began. Lord Derby's letter seems to have convinced them that the country's crisis really was serious, and that this would probably be their last chance to volunteer. At least this was the case in the district in which your correspondent took a share in the direction of the campaign and it seems to have been a pretty general phenomenon. Volunteer canvassers presented themselves in adequate numbers, and as a rule proved themselves men of discretion and common-sense. As a matter of fact, no resentment, whatever, seems to have been shown to their inquiries; and the case of a Welsh miner, who was sentenced to a month's imprisonment for the too material nature of

his answers, remains unique. The canvass is not yet quite at an end, and it is too early to formulate a definite verdict as to its success. If, however, I may take my own district as typical, and venture into the dangerous region of prophecy, I should be inclined to say that men enough are coming forward voluntarily to carry on the war for a considerable period, possibly for as much as a year more. This opinion must, however, be qualified by the fact that we have not been definitely informed just how many men are wanted to effect this, and so that my guess may be fairly accurate as to the number of men obtained, and yet wide of the mark as to the time the supply will last. In any case, Lord Derby's canvass will have very decidedly paved the way for conscription, whatever be the portee of the words I italicize in the following quotation from Mr. Asquith's speech of November 2: "So far as I am concerned, I should certainly say the obligation of the married man to enlist ought not to be enforced, but by voluntary effort and if not by some other means—the unmarried men are dealt with first." The latest announcement of Lord Derby declares that so far the campaign has not been quite so successful as he hoped.

The general result of the canvass shows very few men ready to put themselves on record as absolutely unwilling to fight for their country. The conscientious or positive objector is rare; most of the reasons assigned relate to difficulties that might conceivably be met by legislation or otherwise. In many cases "unfitness" simply means alien birth. In our district no fewer than twenty-seven alien nationalities were represented, including eight Americans and eleven Germans. The employer sometimes gives more trouble than the man himself; but this obstacle will be dealt with in due course, and with short shift. On the whole, the British patriot has good reason to feel proud of his younger fellow-citizens; but perhaps the deepest impression is the pathos of these white and blue cards with their tales of scanty professional incomes, struggling little businesses, numerous dependents and feet just planted on the first rung of the ladder. More and more was it borne in upon one that some provision must be made for the wives and children of such men, which, in the case of their bread-winner's death, would save them from the descent to a lower standard of comfort and culture. The men of private means risk their lives; but these men risk not only their lives but the well-being of their dependents. Something, not inconsistent with democratic equality, must be done to meet such cases. Some how or other, the superfluity of the wealthy must be used to equalize the risks of the men who combine in their own person both their lives and their capital. Conscription of property is logically bound up with conscription of body; and we have to face this problem. Government has been preaching economy to us; but we need some more spectacular sacrifices of property on the part of our potentates and plutocrats than has yet been vouchsafed. The fine spiritual attitude of France is symbolized in the simplicity unpretentiousness, and unselfishness of General Joffre; but England is still waiting for the dominating figure that will equally incorporate the best British characteristics in this time of stress.

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