

made on behalf of the Government and the people of this country, and I am content so to regard it.

There was a splendid response to that appeal; in three and one-half months more than a hundred thousand men enlisted. The need as it then appeared seemed to be served. But later on it became apparent that the struggle would exceed all anticipations. A second division had gone to the front; then a third went, and finally a fourth. The need of reinforcements became greater, while the recruiting during the summer and autumn of 1916 became less. In the autumn of 1916, I made a tour of six provinces of this Dominion in aid of National Service. I was accompanied by the Director General of National Service, and the duty of service was emphasized to vast audiences whose response was inspiring.

NO PLEDGE AGAINST CONSCRIPTION

After my return a delegation of representatives of organized labour waited upon me, their mission being one of inquiry with regard to the National Service cards, and they demanded from me a pledge that under no circumstances would compulsory military service be enforced in this country. I gave them a reply on the spot, and I followed that up by a letter which was published in the press and which bears the date of December 27, 1916. That letter contains the following passage:

You have asked for an assurance that under no circumstances will conscription be undertaken or carried out. As I stated to you at our interview, I must decline to give any such assurance. I hope that conscription may not be necessary, but if it should prove the only effective method to preserve the existence of the State and of the institutions and liberties which we enjoy, I should consider it necessary and I should not hesitate to act accordingly.

Early in February, 1917, I left for England, and in March last I saw at the front a Canadian Army Corps of four divisions, instead of the one division which I had seen in July, 1915. Our forces in France at that time numbered about 130,000 men, including all arms of the service. It is manifest to every one that four divisions require four times as many recruits as one, and at the present time the recruiting is not adequate to the need, as I shall show later on.

THE REAL PROBLEM

There are only two alternatives—to let our forces dwindle from four divisions to three, from three to two, and perhaps from two to one, or, to bring aid by other means than an appeal for voluntary service. That is the problem which confronts Canada to-day.

Let me say a word about the general conditions of the war. Hon. gentlemen, of course, will understand that I may not speak too freely. The effort of the Empire has been wonderful; the effort of our own Dominion has been notable. But no effort is sufficient unless it assures victory, liberty, security and peace. I am in a position to assure the House and the country that the need of reinforcements is urgent, insistent and imperative. The effort of Russia is paralyzed for the present—no one knows for how long. The effort of the United States is only beginning. It is Germany's hope to win the war before the power of the United States can become effective; more than that, it is her confident belief; for otherwise she never would