

In recent newspapers someone speculated on the situation that might arise if somewhere within the French empire there was an English minority, and the question was asked what the attitude of that minority would be towards conscription. There is no parallel at all with the situation in Canada, because under fundamental French law every male citizen is liable to military service; he is called out at the age of twenty and puts in a year or two training in the army, and at the outbreak of war he is called immediately for service in his regiment. If there was an English minority anywhere within the French empire, the men of that minority would have to take military training and, in the event of war, they would be liable to compulsory military service.

The only statement—it is not an argument—that I have ever heard against conscription in this country, is that a certain person does not like it, or that a certain group of persons do not like it. What has that got to do with the question? This is a vital matter, which not only touches the honour of our people but has to do with the security of the nation. The question is this: Is conscription just, fair and equitable? Is it effective? Is there any other system that can take its place? It has been pointed out in this debate that other countries have had experience similar to ours. After the outbreak of war they have begun with a voluntary system, which absorbed the cream of the population, and when a shortage of men made it necessary to enforce conscription at the tail of the hunt, there were many difficulties in dealing with the military dregs that remained.

I venture to say that conscription has not been intelligently discussed in Canada. The question has been beclouded by the likes and dislikes of people, things which have nothing at all to do with it. What we have to determine is the method by which we shall raise our army. Shall we raise it voluntarily until the supply of men falls short, or shall we at the very beginning of war impose conscription and select men according to their fitness, ages and suitability. We have got to come to a proper system of conscription. We cannot any longer run this country on the basis of what people do not like. We do not like taxes, or diseases, or earthquakes, or cold weather or a lot of other things, but we have to accept them and make the best of them, and that is the position we must take with regard to this important question.

The other day the honourable senator from Vancouver (Hon. Mr. Farris) made a curious statement, coming in the middle of his speech as it did. He said he could not understand how it was possible that a young man in first-class physical condition who had received

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several months military training or was in the uniform of the army could or would refuse to take part in the war overseas. I was confronted with that, and probably the greatest shock I ever had was when I ran into people of this sort. If you had not met them you take it that the only explanation of their attitude is that they are the dregs of our population. I spoke to them, for it was part of my job to find out their attitude. They would talk for a while, then they would look down at their boots and refuse to utter a word. Some few tried to put up a grouch or complaint, but it did not amount to a row of shucks. They simply did not want to go to war; they wanted to get out of the army and return home as quickly as they could. I tried to figure out what sort of people they were and where they came from. I concluded that if one could meet the youths' parents and have an intimate conversation, the explanation might be found in the home training, or in the religious and secular teaching they had received or how they had been influenced by the speeches of public men and by the local press. Eventually I came to the conclusion that no small part of their failure to realize their national responsibility is due to the fact that in many of our public schools we have women teaching boys seven years old and over. When a boy reaches the age of seven I think he should be taught by a man. I feel strongly on this matter, because I have for many years watched the development of this anti-social spirit. There are many fine strong-minded women teachers with sound views on citizenship, but they do not teach boys as well as men do. I believe that a man's rougher nature is best for a boy of that age.

The importance of the reinforcement question has been accentuated by those who have preceded me in this debate. It may startle some honourable members, but the fact that our army overseas has been short of reinforcements has for a long time been known in this country. The information comes from men at the front writing to their relatives. Their letters for the most part are smuggled, by-passing the censor's office. That knowledge accounts for the reaction on the part of the public when the then Minister of National Defence, Colonel Ralston, announced officially that there was a shortage of reinforcements for overseas. The whole country knew it and people began to disclose their information. That the Minister sitting in his office here did not receive truthful reports on the situation is in itself significant. Who is responsible for the misinformation supplied to him? The Prime Minister complained that he was taken completely by surprise when Colonel Ralston