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That will seem to many of you the easiest way of meeting the problem. It is not, however, in accord with the policy of keeping our army overseas a 100 per cent voluntary army if we possibly can. The voluntary system of raising our overseas forces has produced splendid results during five years of war. We have always believed that Canada's forces, having begun as voluntary forces, would be more effective, and that the country would be more united in their support, if we continued to rely upon the voluntary system for reinforcements as long as the voluntary system continued to be effective.

*Concerning the Change of Minister of the Department of
National Defence*

Colonel Ralston had grave doubts of our ability to keep up the flow of reinforcements in the next few months by voluntary means. He considered, therefore, that he had no alternative but to recommend that draftees should be sent overseas as reinforcements. The acceptance of this recommendation would have required agreement by the government that no alternative existed to a resort to conscription for overseas service. I do not need to stress the gravity of the decision the government was then obliged to face. Days of anxious deliberation were devoted to an exploration of all possible alternatives.

When I realized that unless Colonel Ralston's recommendation were accepted by the Cabinet, his resignation would follow, I felt it to be my duty, as Prime Minister, to seek the most expert advice I believed to be available. I accordingly consulted General McNaughton. As the builder and first Commander of the Canadian Army, no man, I knew, had the interests of the Army and the men overseas closer to his heart. General McNaughton expressed the belief that the possibilities of securing the required reinforcements by voluntary means had not been exhausted.

The recommendation made by Colonel Ralston was not accepted. Following his resignation, General McNaughton assumed the duties of Minister of National Defence.

I regret deeply the difference which led to Colonel Ralston's resignation. No man in Canada has given more selfless and devoted service to his country throughout the war. In this matter Colonel Ralston has followed the dictates of his conscience in what he feels he owes to his pledged word.

I need not give assurances of General McNaughton's devotion to his country, or of his determination to see that full support is given to the army.

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It is important to remember that the former Minister of National Defence and the present Minister have precisely the same objective in view: they differ only as to the means of reaching that goal.

*Continuance of Voluntary Enlistment Preferable to Resort to
Conscription*

Let me give you some facts and figures which were before the government in reaching its decision.

There is a widespread impression that 60 or 70 or even 80 thousand draftees have been sitting around in military camps in Canada since 1941 or 1942 drawing good pay, and doing little or nothing to help win the war. That picture is almost totally incorrect. The facts are quite different.

In March, 1941, we began to call up men for compulsory service in Canada for the duration of the war. Up to September 30, 1944, the army had accepted about 150,000 draftees. The present total number of men enrolled as draftees is about 68,000. Of these some 9,000 are on extended leave, on compassionate or other grounds. Many of them are unsuited for military duties. Of the so-called "home defence" force the effective total strength, therefore, is under 60,000.

Here I pause to correct one widespread false impression about the draftees. Of the 60,000 only 23,000 are from the Province of Quebec, and only 25,000 from all Canada are French speaking.

You will ask what has happened to the other 82,000 draftees accepted by the Army since 1941. There has been a wastage of about 33,000 including men discharged for medical or other reasons which unfitted them to be soldiers. About 6,000 draftees have enlisted as volunteers in the Navy or the Air Force. The largest group, about 43,000 have enlisted as volunteers for General Service in the army. General Service includes service overseas. In the army overseas fighting today are many thousands of men who were once draftees.

The "home defence" army is not a static force. Its composition is constantly changing. This year, nearly 15,000 men have been called up and enrolled as draftees, and more than 10,000 draftees have volunteered for General Service. Since the landing in France in June voluntary enlistments for overseas from the "home defence" troops have been higher than the numbers called up and accepted as draftees.

From a purely military standpoint, there is no argument that it is preferable to reinforce a voluntary army with volunteers. The military authorities report that enlisting gives the draftees a new