

frid Laurier), who was then Prime Minister, arranged that a number of our soldiers should go to South Africa, not for the defence of Canada—there was no talk about an invasion of Canada—he did not take a referendum; he did not call Parliament together. If I remember aright, when he proposed to build the National Transcontinental Railway at a cost of about \$200,000,000 he first entered into the agreement with the Grand Trunk Pacific railway before he brought the proposal to Parliament at all, although he was three years away from a consultation with the people.

On the 18th August, 1914, when the leader of the Opposition, with greater show of reason than now, might have said, "Let us have a referendum," he did not do so. He gave a pledge that the people of this country would take part in the war and continue to the end. Now, he wants to ask them whether they wish to continue or not. It is an insult to the people of Canada to propose this referendum.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. CROTHERS: What does it imply? On the 18th August, 1914, we said the people of Canada were unanimously in favour of our entering the war, and of continuing in it till the end. The referendum implies that they have wearied in well-doing, that the people of Canada are quitters and wish to abandon our boys at the front, and these gentlemen suggest that a majority of the people will be against conscription.

Mr. PUGSLEY: How is that implied?

Mr. CROTHERS: If my hon. friend from St. John cannot see how it is implied, I do not think I will enlighten him. None are so blind as those who do not wish to see.

Mr. MARCIL: Australia voted against conscription, but did not go back on the boys at the front.

Mr. CROTHERS: Conditions in Australia are very different from conditions in Canada. I do not know the pledges that they made in Australia.

Mr. PUGSLEY: In what respect are they different?

Mr. CROTHERS: I want to say to the hon. gentleman from Bonaventure that we have it on very good authority that "by their fruit ye shall know them"—not by their words or their eloquence, or their promise that their constituencies will produce a fair share of men and money—but by their works ye shall know them. Some-

thing has been said about the working men of this country. Having been pretty intimately associated with the workingmen during the last five years, I wish to say that of the 160,000 members of labour organizations in Canada, 30,000 have abandoned the bench and gone to the front to fight for us and liberty.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. CROTHERS: There being 160,000 members of labour organizations and assuming that the workingmen of Canada who are not in organizations have volunteered to fight for their country in the same ratio as have the union men, then there are at the front 150,000 men who were employed at manual labour, fighting for liberty. What is the proposition placed before us? Is it to abandon them? Does any man mean to tell me that the labour element in Canada is opposed to a war, which is waged to secure liberty and freedom when 150,000 of them have left the bench, shouldered the rifle, risked their lives, left fatherless children, all for the sake of human liberty. Do hon. gentlemen mean to tell me that the working people of this country are opposed to conscription when our continuance in this war depends absolutely upon compulsory service. That fact has sunken deep in the mind of every member of this House, and no matter what any man may say, he knows it in his heart. The only way we can back up the boys at the front is by applying the Military Service Act. It is sometimes asked, "Why do you not enforce the Militia Act?" It was enforced in August last. That law was on the statute-book which provided that every male in Canada between the ages of 18 and 60, whether in Quebec or British Columbia, could be compelled to serve his country. It was only a question of how he should be selected. The Militia Act provides that it could be done by ballot, by mere chance—haphazard. If the most important man to this community were to pick out a ballot which meant he should go, he would have to go.

Mr. PUGSLEY: Why should he not go?

Mr. CROTHERS: Because he is of more use at home.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. CROTHERS: The main difference between the Militia Act and the Military Service Act is in the mode of selecting the men, and in this Act provision is made for keeping at home the men urgently needed in Canada, and those we can spare