

listment—even if voluntary enlistment were producing men as fast as it did in its best days—lies in what those hon. gentlemen have put forward as the very basis for their affirmation that we should have no conscription at all. Just to the extent that they are right in their facts, just to the extent that we cannot spare men from Canada, does it become imperatively necessary for us to see that when we send more men we shall send those and those only who can be spared. This is a measure to ascertain who can be spared, and because they argue that nobody can be spared, gentlemen get up and say: "You must stop right here; you must not find out who can be spared. We tell you nobody can be spared, so stop your measure." What are they apprehensive of? Can they be so convinced that nobody can be spared, when they are so frightened of inquiry being made whether anybody can be spared? I do not agree with them in their statement that nobody can be spared. I am absolutely confident that there are still many men whom we can spare for this great work which is essential for the maintenance of Canada's honour. I am willing to take the risk of having the matter fully and carefully investigated as under this measure it is proposed to be investigated and I shall have to take the consequences if that investigation proves me to be wrong. So I say that just because it is true that we have reached the stage where we have to scrutinize carefully just whom we can spare and whom we cannot, it has become the duty of the Government of this country and of the members of this House and of the people of this country to say to the voluntary system: Halt there. We cannot afford to let who will go. Many of those who would go, we need at home and as the Act says, it is more in the national interest that they should remain at home than enlist: Canada needs those men. If we continued with the voluntary system, what has happened in the past would undoubtedly be repeated in the future; the men most valuable at home would go, as they have gone before, and the men who might make excellent soldiers but who are doing no useful work at home would stay in Canada and help consume the very products that we are urged to save so as to send them to Great Britain and the Allies.

To me at least it seems quite clear that we owe it to Canada to see that there shall be a selection of the men who are to go, and that those go who can be spared, and those stay who are absolutely needed at

home. As I have said that reason has come to me as the result of reflection on the strongest argument put forward as a reason against sending anybody at all, namely, that we could not spare a man. I do not believe that latter proposition, but I do believe that there is this element of truth in it: that the time has come when it behooves us to carefully scrutinize the men who go and the men who stay. That being so, it becomes the duty of those who are responsible for seeing that Canada does her full duty in this war, to take steps that will bring about the result that the man most useful as a soldier shall be a soldier and that the man most useful for the great work of production and for maintaining our people here at home shall be utilized for that purpose, or at all events that he shall have the opportunity of turning his energies to the fulfilment of that purpose.

Bear in mind, Mr. Speaker, that it might be absolutely true that we need in this country every man for the work of production, agricultural and industrial, and it might be true at the same time that there were many men in this country whom we could let go, because, unfortunately, every man who is at home here is not helping in the work of industrial and agricultural production, and so far I have not heard it suggested that there is any method by which the men who are doing nothing can be compelled to work in industrial or agricultural production. It is quite possible that the men who are not so engaged, whether that ought to be or not, might, under military discipline, make good soldiers. Canada cannot abandon her effort, and I am not going to discuss that, because, if what has already been said in this House has not convinced those who heard it, that Canada cannot in honour abandon her effort, then for my part I abandon hope of carrying that conviction to their minds. That is my starting point, and I think that the general sense of this House is that that is true. If we are to do our duty there is only one course open to us, and that is that we should provide additional men by selective conscription, not to save this man or that man from going to the war, not as some hon. gentlemen are at pains to insinuate, because we are looking for a method of discrimination between one man and another, but in order that we may see to it that both of Canada's duties are performed, one of which duties is that to which my hon. friend from St. Mary's (Mr. Martin) attaches such great importance.