

Thus, at the very beginning of the war, it was recognized that the words "for the defence thereof" could not apply to this case; that the troops could not be sent under the Militia Act, and that they should be sent as Imperial troops and as serving voluntarily in the war. That is conclusive.

Sir Sam Hughes: What is the date of that despatch?

Sir Wilfrid Laurier: First of August, 1914. Then there is an Order in Council, passed on August 6, as follows:

"The Committee of the Privy Council have had before them a report, dated 6th August, 1914, from the Minister of Militia and Defence, representing: in view of the state of war now existing between the United Kingdom, and the Dominions, Colonies, and Dependencies of the British Empire on the one side, and Germany on the other side, creating a menace to the well-being and integrity of the Empire, and having regard to the duty of the Dominion of Canada as one of those Dominions to provide for its own defence and to assist in maintaining the integrity and honour of the Empire, that it is desirable to mobilize Militia units of the various arms of the service of such effective strength as may from time to time be determined by Your Royal Highness in Council, such units to be composed of officers and men who are willing to volunteer for Overseas service under the British Crown."

And so this was for voluntary service alone. Nor is that all. There was this despatch sent by the Governor General on 5th of August:

"My Government being desirous of putting beyond doubt status of Canadian volunteers requests that His Majesty may be pleased to issue an order bringing these volunteers under sections 175 and 176 of the Army Act."

Thus, being in doubt of the power of the Government to send troops under the Militia Act, they asked that the Government of Great Britain should issue an order to enlist them for the British Army. And so we have reason to believe that the Militia Act, as we have understood it, never applied to this case.

It is quite true that other hon. gentlemen have joined issue with my right hon. friend on this point. The subject was debated at some length by my hon. friend from South Wellington (Mr. Guthrie) the other day, and by my hon. friend the Solicitor General (Mr. Meighen) this afternoon. But with all respect for these hon. gentlemen, and for any others who may share their view, I prefer the view of my right hon. leader. I rely upon his forty years' experience in this Parliament, and upon his intimate connection with the change that was made in 1904 in the Militia Act which has been under discussion. I have only to add that if this Military Service Bill makes no change in principle, but merely a change in the method of selection, what is the reason for bringing it in at all? Why not merely bring down an amendment to the Militia Act if the difference was so trifling as that? Is not the refutation of that contention contained in the very fact that this Bill has been introduced?

The right hon. leader of the Opposition dealt with the labour situation as affected by this Bill. His argument was challenged by the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Sir George Foster). May I digress for a moment to say that in all probability, with the exception of the right hon. leader of the Opposition, no hon. member of this House has had such a long and genuine admiration for the debating power and eloquence of the Minister of Trade and Commerce as myself. I well remember the first occasion upon which I heard him, now more years ago than I care to recall. From that day to the present I have always acknowledged his great power as a debater. I do not think that power was ever more eloquently displayed than when he spoke in this Chamber a few days ago. Notwithstanding that, I take the liberty of joining issue with him. In the course of his speech the other day, addressing himself to the argument of my right hon. leader on the labour situation, the Minister of Trade and Commerce instanced the position of labour in Great Britain and the United States under compulsory military service. I submit that the comparison failed to meet the argument of my right hon. leader for two reasons: In the first place, the Derby registration scheme preceded the introduction of compulsory military service in Great Britain; and in the second place the United States Government recognized labour as soon as it decided to go into the war, and immediately availed itself of the services of Samuel Gompers, the leader of organized labour in the United States. Even after three years of war this Government has done nothing like that in this country. If my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce and other hon. members of the Government will not heed the advice of the leader of the Opposition, perhaps they will listen to the advice of a friend of their own. Foreseeing the effect of this Bill on labour, Sir Joseph Flavelle addressed a letter to the Canadian manufacturers of war munitions, in which he says:

Dear Sirs.—May I, on behalf of the board solicit your serious co-operation in personal attention and forethought whereby misunderstandings or difficulties with your work-people may be averted?

I am led to say this because I remember the necessity of securing further support for the men at the front means there will be considerable impairment of the present factory working forces in Canada.

As there is great industrial activity and a general shortage of efficient labour, it is to be expected that restlessness in labour circles will be increased rather than decreased when men