

of opinion, differences of race, differences upon political questions. But I am proud to say that we live together as good friends, having confidence and trust in each other, and that we can maintain that condition of affairs without the kind attention of the hon. member for Montcalm.

I have said that we ought to get rid of all consideration of the fact that we are of different races or different creeds, or that we come from different provinces, because at this time one great question concerns our common country, Canada. I have said a word about my feeling for my own province of Quebec; I felt that I owed it that. But since we have had questions of race, may I add one word about the race that has been criticised in this House. I question no man's right to say what he believes to be pertinent and relevant; and I am in the judgment of every other member of the House whether what I say be proper or not. But in view of what has been said, I desire to dissociate myself—I go further and say that I absolutely dissociate this Government—from any suggestion that anything in this measure is directed against any one part of the country, against the province of Quebec, against any one race in the country, or in particular against the French-Canadian people. I have heard the criticism, and I have heard the defence. To me, there is one overpowering, all-answering defence, and that is that we proceeded to recruit under a voluntary system. What does recruiting under a voluntary system mean? It means that this Government and this Parliament and the Canadian public practically unanimously took the position that upon the question of recruiting each man was absolutely free to act according to his own judgment and his own conscience. Nobody took the responsibility of indicating that a man had any duty to discharge one way or the other. The principle of voluntary recruitment means that every man has the right to decide for himself; that his responsibility is to his own conscience. That being the case, I do not think that it is within the jurisdiction of any one to condemn a man because he exercised a recognized right. On the other hand, I have heard much that was said as against the criticisms made; and, frankly, a good deal of that I would be just as glad not to have heard. I do not undertake to determine whether these contentions were well founded. At any rate they did not seem to me to be quite necessary; sometimes one may be on the defensive, and still overlap a little into unneces-

sary offensive. I should like to get out of that atmosphere; I should like to approach this question purely and simply from the point of view of a Canadian.

What is the question? The question is: What is Canada's duty at this moment under conditions as they exist now? In August of 1914, Canada went to war. It is not very material now to discuss why she went to war. She went to war of her own volition, as was evidenced by the unanimous action of the membership of this House, enthusiastically endorsed by the voice of practically all the people of Canada. Since then she has been at war, and to-day in the first place the question is: Should she withdraw from that war? In my opinion that is the one question, because we must either go forward to enact this Bill or we should withdraw from the war. I know that other people whose opinions I respect do not look at the matter in that way, but that is the way it presents itself to my mind. Why do I say that? We have a certain force at the front. I have not heard it suggested that the force that has gone to the front is greater than represents Canada's fair share in this common enterprise into which we have gone with Great Britain and the Allied Nations. This measure proposes what? To send an additional force? To add people to our force? This measure purposes providing reinforcements so that the force that is at the front may be maintained. It seems to me either we must provide those reinforcements, or we must withdraw from the war, because our force at the front is, day by day, being depleted. There are people who say that we never should have gone into the war, and people who say: Now we have exhausted our effort we should go no further; let our battalions disappear, and let Canada cease to be known as an active participant in this great struggle for the defence of Christian civilization upon this globe. Those men, in my opinion, are absolutely logical when they say: No conscription. I do not say they are right, because I do not agree with their premises. But the men who say that we ought to go on with this war, but that we ought not to take to-day, under the conditions of to-day, the step that this measure purposes taking, are, in my judgment—I speak with all respect—absolutely illogical. I say that for two reasons. In the first place, I do not know and I do not care whose is the fault or what are the causes that brought it about, but I do know that persistence in the voluntary system is not bringing us the men