

Mr. Speaker, as the Bill, which I am presenting to the House has created a good deal of public interest, I shall, by your leave, make a somewhat fuller explanation of its provisions and of the circumstances out of which it has arisen than would ordinarily be the case on such a motion.

Let me first ask the attention of the House to the events of nearly three years ago. It is unnecessary at this juncture to enter into any prolonged examination of the causes of this war or of the purposes for which it was undertaken. Beyond question it was the aim and intention of Germany to assassinate Belgium's rights and liberties; to crush France; to make eventual peace with Russia; to have our Empire stand aside, so that it might afterwards meet the fate of France and of Belgium in order that Germany might dominate the world. For this purpose Germany made a most intense and careful preparation during nearly half a century, and she proceeded to carry out her purpose by methods so barbarous and revolting that humanity stood aghast.

As to Canada's determination, there was never one moment's doubt. Our nation was united in a common purpose. Men of all parties expressed a most resolute and vehement determination to carry the war to victory and to an abiding peace. It was realized by all that the future of civilization and democracy was at stake.

Within six weeks after the war broke out, 33,000 men, fully armed, well trained, and thoroughly equipped, were ready to depart from our shores. Our authorized forces were increased by 30,000 men on the 7th day of November, 1914, they were increased to 150,000 in all on the 8th day of July, 1915, and to 250,000 on the 30th day of October, 1915.

In 1915, and also in 1916, many delegations from all parts of the country came to Ottawa and waited upon the Government for the purpose of urging compulsory military service. They emphasized with very great force the disadvantages of a voluntary system and the need of more men. I realized then and I explained to them possible difficulties, some of which I communicated privately to the leading members of these various delegations.

#### 500,000 MEN AUTHORIZED

On the first day of January, 1916, I issued a message to the Canadian people in which I announced that Canada's authorized forces would be increased to 500,000 men. In that message I used these words:

By the greatness of the need our future efforts must be measured.

The necessary Order in Council was passed on January 12, 1916, and it was laid on the table of the House. No criticism was made in Parliament of the action which the Government thus took; no motion was moved against the Government's action, and the necessary Parliamentary appropriations were voted unanimously. In many parts of the country my message was construed as a pledge. It was not issued as a pledge; it was the authorization of a further increase in the Canadian Expeditionary Force; but it has been deemed to be a pledge