

boy from my county gave up their lives at Vimy Ridge that liberty might prevail in the world. I am not trying to shield my farmers from their duty—and, as I have said, they would not thank me if I did—but there are other considerations which impel me to make this suggestion. We are fighting two wars in this great struggle. One is on the battle line in Europe, a war of men. Our sons there are bleeding and dying for this country, and we need to give them all the support they require, and we intend to do it. The other battle is a battle of production. We are fighting that battle in Canada and throughout America, and unless we are just as sincere and as forceful in that fight as are the boys at the front in the fight they carry on we are going to fail in the struggle. I shall not go into the details of my reason for saying this, but I do not say it on my own initiative. We have the words of Mr. Balfour on this subject. He told us, when he came to Washington, that the supplying of foodstuffs is as important as the supplying of men, and that he was looking to this continent for the means to feed the Allies.

We have the word of Lloyd George to the same effect. We have the word of the President of the Board of Agriculture of Great Britain, Mr. Prothero, who said a day or two ago that "the outcome of this war may ultimately hang on food production." These men are all witnesses to the fact that food production is one of the most important factors in the successful carrying on of the war. How do we find the situation in this country? How is it in my province of Ontario, or, to be more precise, how is it in the county of Middlesex? I am informed by a representative of one of the railway corporations, a concern which keeps track of the labour situation throughout the land, that to-day in the province of Ontario there is a greater shortage of labour by thirty per cent than in the western part of Canada. Why? The men who worked on the farms in Ontario before the war commenced were largely British born, and, all honour to them, when the call of duty came they went to the trenches to fight England's battles. Many of our own Canadian farm boys did the same. Others, persuaded by the larger remuneration of munition factories, went to those factories. The result is that to-day in my county the men of the farm are struggling as they never struggled in their lives before to put in their crops and get them off. There never was a time in the history of Ontario when there was such a shortage of farm labour. That is one reason

[Mr. Ross.]

why I say that, if we are to win this struggle, we must put an express exemption in this Bill that no man bona fide engaged in agricultural industry shall be sent to combatant military duty.

Mr. LALOR: Would the hon. gentleman apply that only to farmers' sons, or would he apply it to any man working on a farm?

Mr. ROSS: My idea would be to confine it to the men necessary to work the farm. For instance, I would not think it right, if there were six men working a hundred acres, to leave them all there. But that is a little aside from the point, because under the working out of this Bill as I think it should be worked out, the farm labour of the country would be mobilized by the Government; and if there were six men working a hundred acres the Government would have the power, not to take these men for combatant service, but rather to send those who could be spared to other parts of the country where farmers are needed to sow and reap the crop. I do not think that any farmer could object to that, and that it is fair. I think my suggestion most important, and I trust it will receive the sympathetic attention of the Prime Minister.

But this Bill, in my opinion, is to be found fault with, not so much for what it contains as for what it does not contain. I shall not repeat arguments so ably made by my hon. friend from Sherbrooke (Mr. McCrea) and my hon. friend from South Renfrew (Mr. Graham), but I do say that this Government, when they are conscripting the young men of this country, should be honest with the people and provide for equality of sacrifice in this great struggle and, as these hon. members have urged, should take immediate steps to conscript the wealth of this land. It has been said that this is a very nebulous proposition, that it is hard to define what "the conscription of wealth" means. It did not seem hard to define it in Great Britain where men are paying thirty and forty per cent on their incomes. The United States did not find any insuperable difficulty in this matter, for though they have been in the war only three months, they have taken steps to carry the conscription of wealth into effect. It has been said also that such a provision could not be put into this Bill because it is not a cognate subject with the conscription of men, and also because you would have to get the consent of the Governor General, as it involves the imposition of taxes upon