

which has been made during this war or the last. My leader has measured up very finely to his responsibilities during this war. He has given the government good, independent support. I hope that, notwithstanding the mistakes which have been made, the government will press on with the prosecution of the war and give our troops in all theatres the help they need and deserve. It should certainly consider the training of additional regiments for use when the new peninsular war begins in Europe, because it is there, not in Canada, that the battle is going to be.

Mr. ARTHUR J. LAPOINTE (Matapédia-Matane) (Translation): Mr. Speaker, the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) wishes by means of Bill No. 80 to strike out section 3 of the National Resources Mobilization Act, and thus do away with all barriers to conscription of men for overseas service. This measure is, to my mind, one of the most important and critical to be submitted to the commons since the great war. The discussion may even become violent, unless hon. members of this house exercise a great deal of good-will and moderation. That is why I intend, during these brief remarks, to respect the opinion of those who differ with me on the burning issue of conscription. In critical times such as these, when everyone is highly keyed up, it is important to discuss calmly the grave issues with which we are faced. Mr. Speaker, since 1935 when I first entered this house, I have been loyal to my party, for I had no serious reason to do otherwise. I have always had faith in the right hon. prime minister, believing then as now in his utmost sincerity. It is therefore with the deepest regret that I find myself obliged to take issue with him on so grave a measure. The dictates of my conscience leave me no other choice.

During the 1917 election campaign, I was serving in the trenches as a volunteer. Then, as now, I did not believe in conscription for overseas service and voted against the government. Two years ago, thinking that I might once more be of service to my country, I joined up, this time again as a volunteer. The prime minister does not intend perhaps to resort immediately to conscription for overseas service, but through this bill he is nevertheless asking us to accept the principle of such a measure. After that, the road to conscription would be wide open. If I am so strongly opposed to the measure, it is because I am convinced that this system, far from helping our war effort, will cause deep dissension among the people of Canada and

[Mr. Church.]

undoubtedly destroy national unity, which is so essential to the success of our common cause.

I know the people of my constituency whom I have had the honour of representing in this house for almost seven years. They are willing to sacrifice everything to victory, but they are averse to compulsion and they will never condone the implementation of such a measure. So far, the people of Matapédia-Matane, together with the whole population of Gaspé have very generously answered the call of their country. Their sons have enlisted in large numbers and I am positive that were conscription to be enforced very few conscripts could be found in many parishes of my part of the country, for all able-bodied men have enlisted voluntarily and have generously answered the call of their country. They wished to follow in the footsteps of two great heroes, Brilliant and Keable, both of whom used to live in my constituency and both of whom have been awarded the Victoria Cross. They were the only two French Canadians ever to receive such a distinction which they have bought with their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I have absolute confidence in the efficiency of the voluntary system of enlistment. I am convinced that it will provide for all the needs of our various forces, as long as it is properly administered and supported by all people of good-will. I am convinced that were the supporters of conscription to put forth as much effort to promote voluntary enlistments as they have done, especially in the last few months, to organize their campaign in favour of conscription, we would have, at the present time, many more volunteers than we could use. I do not wish to cast any doubt on the sincerity of certain supporters of this method of enlistment, but nevertheless I cannot help but feel that many of them are much more interested in causing trouble for the Right Honourable Prime Minister than in promoting the war effort.

The hon. Minister of National Defence (Mr. Ralston) has stated that the voluntary system is adequate to supply all present needs of our various armed services, even taking into account the imminent entry of our troops into battle. In that case what is the use of reviving, every once in a while, this national bone of contention?

Mr. Speaker, about two years ago, the powerful German war machine was achieving extraordinary successes in Europe. The French army, considered as one of the best in the world, had sustained the greatest military disaster in its history. Germany, elated by its victories, was hastily organizing