

numbers than the figures of the department would justify. Are we to infer that French Canadians are always put in the lead in places of danger? I repeat that their number would have been still greater were voluntary enlistment given fair play, and had we in the Government of this country men who could carry the respect and support of the people of the province of Quebec.

I believe that the union of all Canadians is the greatest strength of national defence; one of the greatest factors towards the winning of the war is to have a united body of citizens all intent upon bringing about unity, in order to uphold the efforts of our soldiers in the field and show that there is behind them a united country. This Bill, in the circumstances which have preceded, which accompany, and which will follow it, is going to disrupt that national unity and irreparably divide this fair country. Conscription should not and cannot be enforced in this country, as in every other British country, without something like general consent. Does anybody challenge this proposition? I state it on very good authority, on no less an authority than that of the very distinguished British statesman who introduced compulsory service in the British Parliament, Right Hon. Mr. Asquith. Speaking in the House of Commons on the 2nd November, 1915, Mr. Asquith referred to the objections to compulsory service, and said:

It is based upon an entirely different ground, namely, that the employment of compulsion under existing conditions would forfeit what I regard to be of supreme and capital importance, that is, the maintenance of national unity. That again is an abstract objection, but when translated into concrete terms it means this; if you were to apply, I do not speak of any particular method, but any method of coercion or compulsion, without something in the nature, I will not say of universal but of general consent, you would defeat your own purpose. It would not be a practicable or workable method of making good and filling up the gap left by the defects of the voluntary system.

And further he said:

My proposition, if I were to formulate one, would be this: not that I rule out compulsion as an impossible expedient, but that compulsion, if resorted to, ought only to be resorted to, and can only from a practical point of view be resorted to, or, in other words, be made a workable expedient for filling up the gap which you have to supply,—with something in the nature of general consent.

And in the same debate Mr. John Redmond said:

I, like the Prime Minister, am against compulsion. I believe that to impose compulsion in this country, unless, as he said, the country were practically unanimous in favour of it, would be a folly and a crime.

Hon. gentlemen may say that Mr. Asquith has modified his views in that regard. He has not modified them. When he introduced the first compulsory Bill on 6th January, 1916, he made it clear that public opinion in the country was calling upon him to redeem the pledge he had given to the married men who had enlisted under Lord Derby's scheme, that they should not be called upon to serve while younger and unmarried men were held back. And the opponents of compulsory service admitted that the great majority of the people of the United Kingdom were in favour of the Bill on account of the very diplomatic promise given by Mr. Asquith to the married men which had made all of them supporters of conscription. Ireland was not subject to the scheme of Lord Derby, nor to Mr. Asquith's pledge, and was excluded from the Bill. Have we in this country, in the language of Mr. Asquith, "something in the nature of general consent" to compulsory service? Why, the great objection to consulting the public on this matter that is urged by supporters of the Bill is the fear that it will be overwhelmingly defeated. My hon. friend from South Wellington (Mr. Guthrie) went so far as to suggest that if a vote is to be taken, it ought to be an open vote. Let me say to my hon. friend in the most friendly spirit that these words sound queer in the mouth of a Liberal. The suggestion seemed quite appropriate when made by a new nobleman in the columns of the *Montreal Star*. Such a proposal I deem to be moreover, rather a reflection upon, even an insult to, the people with whom my hon. friend from South Wellington is better acquainted than I am, as conveying the idea that they would not have the courage to say openly what they think and believe. Using again the language of Mr. Asquith, I say that from the practical point of view, conscription cannot be a workable expedient without something of the nature of general consent. I submit, moreover, that all the nations and dominions participating in this war must contribute their utmost in order to overthrow the menace of German militarism, but the best way for them is to contribute according to their respective opportunities. In June, 1916, Sir George Paish wrote in the *Statist*:

Victory over militarism will depend as much upon the world's farmers in general, and upon those of America and Canada in particular, as it does upon the armies at the front.

In one of the recent editions of *L'Echo de Paris*, M. Maurice Barrès, a famous writer says: