

why we should stop? If men are wanted at the front, and if there are men who can go without affecting the national interest even though the sacrifice on their part be great, I as a Canadian say, let them go. If other men are required for the production of food or the manufacture of munitions, though their task be less onerous and involved in less danger, let them stay at home and do the work they can best do if that work is essential to the maintenance of our national position and the strength of the Allies. Any man who has studied the progress of the war from its inception up to the present cannot help being impressed with the fact that our almost suffering defeat in the early days of the war was due to lack of munitions. Any man who has watched the strategy of the war during the last year and who has observed the successes at Albert Ridge, Messines Ridge and Vimy Ridge must recognize that it was preponderance of artillery that made possible the advance of the infantry. Why should we not look at the whole matter in a broad way? Some men will be called upon to give more than others. But there are greater sacrifices than those made by the men who go to the front. The great sacrifice is made by the man who stays at home realizing that he should go and could go but does not go; because that man sacrifices his individuality and his honour. What I say of that man I say of the fathers and mothers who are keeping their boys home: they are sacrificing their sons in keeping them back more than other men are sacrificing their sons in letting them go.

I do not think that the amendment that has been proposed adds anything to the Bill. On one side you have military service; on the other side you have national necessity. If the tribunals act fairly as between man and man, and if national service takes preference over military service, then national service will prevail; but where military service takes priority over national service, military service will prevail. In other words, each case will be considered on its merits. We must assume that the tribunals will act fairly. No doubt there will be cases of individual hardship; cases where, perhaps, justice is not done as between man and man. To err, we know, is human. But we must trust to somebody the responsibility of seeing that the Act is fairly enforced. I started out a warm friend of the voluntary system. I followed it during many months of effort to obtain recruits; I was active in the district from which I

[Mr. Nickle.]

come in assisting in the attempt to get more men. But I was driven to the conclusion that the voluntary system was extravagant and wasteful, and that it had become inefficient. Reaching this conclusion after long experience and careful study of the situation, I came to the further conclusion that we must have conscription. If the maximum efficiency of Canada is to be attained, surely it can only be by the taking of those who are not wanted at home. The member for Edmonton challenged me to give instances of men who would not be excused on the ground of national necessity.

Mr. OLIVER: Who could not be?

Mr. NICKLE: Who could not be? You might as well say there would be no criminals in Canada if a judge should exclude all persons on the ground that they were not guilty. But judicial functions are not performed in that way. The facts are laid before the tribunals; the evidence is weighed pro and con. We assume that the men we place in responsible positions exercise wise discretion and reach their conclusions upon the evidence and the facts presented to them. The same principle that guides our courts of law will guide those tribunals, and if these principles are carried out, the men who can be spared will go and those who cannot be spared will stay at home to do the national work. My hon. friend challenged me to give instances. I know dozens of men in my own riding—and it is a district that has not given ungenerously to this cause—who can be spared to go to the front and who are willing to go provided the sacrifice is equally borne throughout the country.

Mr. OLIVER: Hear, hear.

Mr. NICKLE: They are willing to set to one side all that has been done. They say: Although we have given liberally of our best—more, perhaps than we are called upon to give—we are willing to start all over again. If you make this measure apply with equality from the Atlantic to the Pacific, we shall do our duty to the utmost limit of our power.

Mr. OLIVER: My hon. friend has referred to the patriotism of those who say that they take no account of what has been done; that they are prepared to go on an equality now. That is very generous on their part, considering what they have done as compared with what other people have done. What I say is that those who have given of their best in the past are willing to