

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: (Reading):

—established under the Act for this purpose.

Should your son already have received an order to report for duty with a Depot Battalion, he may through his Commanding Officer make application to have his case submitted to the Leave of Absence Board for consideration.

Yours truly,

Sgd. Deputy Minister of Justice.

Sir, this is a very significant commentary upon the legislation which was passed last session. I leave it to the comments of the Government and their followers. I do not want to make the matter worse than it is; but in the face of all this I ask if the Government and their followers are satisfied that in introducing that legislation they chose the best means of helping to win the war?

We are now, Sir, in the fourth year of the war. The military situation is serious, more serious, perhaps, than at any time since the early days of September, 1914, when the cable every day brought us news that the German armies were advancing towards Paris and had almost reached the gates of that city. Luckily, we were all relieved when a few days afterwards the news came that the German advance had been stopped and their armies thrown back from the gates of Paris, from the river Marne to the river Aisne. Four years have elapsed since then. No great advances have been made either way. The Germans have not made any headway towards Paris, and the Allied armies have in no sense made a great advance towards the Rhine, and it would be a bold man who would say that the campaign of 1918 will result in an advance towards the Rhine such as we contemplated in 1915, in 1916 and again in 1917.

What is not beyond doubt, what is only too certain, is that day in and day out it is becoming more evident that the food problem may become perhaps the most important factor in the final decision towards victory. Upon this I offer no comment; the Government know the situation better than we do. I ask them for no more information than they can give us; I do not know what their attitude will be upon this question.

But, Sir, I have only to repeat once more that we, on this side of the House, stand exactly as we have at all times stood since the war began by this declaration: It is our fervent and solemn conviction that the issue which is now trembling in the balance of destiny is that of Freedom and Liberty itself. It is a sad thing that upon such an

[Sir Wilfrid Laurier.]

issue as this, when we are battling for the sacred cause of Liberty and Freedom, that I should have to arraign the Government for having itself sapped the foundations of the free institutions under which we live, a deed which has already produced its evil effects. Men there are to-day who declare by voice and pen that all the militant powers are governed by the same selfish spirit. Against such an unfounded assertion I protest with all the force at my command and with all the energy I can put into my words. To say that there is no difference between the belligerent—to put Germany on the same plane as France, as the United States, as Belgium and as England, is simply to flout history. The rulers of Germany have shown that they will respect no law, neither of God, nor of nations, nor of men.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Germany has shown she holds the view that there is one law for herself and another for the nations against whom she is warring, and she is seeking to realize her schemes of aggrandisement and ambition regardless of the consequences to others. Sir, if there is one reason more than another which makes me proud of the cause for which we are fighting, it is that in this contest the best nations of the earth—Great Britain, France, Belgium and the United States, are united in the cause of battling to the end for Freedom. Unfortunately the people of Germany do not seem to be yet sufficiently advanced in the doctrine of self-government, or in the principles of freedom, to assert the sovereign right of the people to check their rulers where those rulers go wrong. On the other hand the Allied Nations are all united in proclaiming their devotion to the cause of freedom; and if any government among them should depart from that ideal, an ideal that still lives in the minds, in the hearts, and in the souls of the people, sooner or later when the greater danger which overshadows us has been conquered and overcome, the recusants will be called to severe account. But our first duty is to overcome the greater danger which threatens, and to that imperative duty we on this side of the House will give, with all our might, whatever it may be, and with our whole heart, we shall give it our undivided support.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to join in the appreciation which has been expressed by my right hon. friend (Sir Wilfrid Laur-