

Comparative merits of two systems

It cannot be denied that conscription in theory has many attractions. Theoretically, it is the fairest method of raising an army; there are many who say it is more democratic; and the crowning argument is that it is more efficient. It is not my intention to enter into a detailed consideration of its theoretical merits; we have no choice but to take account of the practical circumstances of men and affairs--history, tradition, geography and a host of other complex facts which go into the make-up of our country and our people.

But let me glance briefly at the theoretical points I have mentioned. Why is conscription for overseas service a fairer method of recruitment than voluntary enlistment? The argument is based on a single assumption: that service in the army is something to be avoided and that it is an advantage to stay at home and escape such service. It is true that service at home involves no sacrifice comparable with the sacrifice of life itself which the soldier must be prepared, if need be, to make. The imposition of conscription for overseas service would, however, do nothing whatever to remove any material advantages enjoyed by those who remain at home over those who enlist in the armed forces. The way to remedy such