

say, in all friendliness, that I believe there is nothing that could be done by this Parliament which would bring as great credit among the people of Canada as would be given us if, after passing the other measure to which many objections have been raised we were to proceed to show that we were in earnest in this matter and pass a measure providing for the mobilization of all our forces in order that no effort may be lacking to carry on this war to a successful issue. Believing this, I have the honour to move this amendment, seconded by Mr. Pardee:

That all the words after the word "that" in the said resolution be struck out and the following be substituted therefor.

In the opinion of this House the consideration of the terms of said resolution should be deferred until the Government brings before Parliament measures providing that those best able to pay will be asked to contribute their full share to the cost of the war and by which all agricultural, industrial, transportation and natural resources of Canada

will be organized so as to insure the greatest possible assistance to the Empire in the war, and to reduce the cost of living to the Canadian people.

Sir George Foster followed the Hon. Mr. Graham and practically instructed his followers in the House to reject the amendment which Mr. Graham had presented. Others who spoke were Mr. Pugsley, E. M. Macdonald, and F. F. Pardee who seconded Mr. Graham's motion, and Mr. Richard Blain.

The vote was then taken and Mr. Graham's amendment was defeated by a majority of 17.

Sir Robert Borden's resolution for an extension was then taken up and we quote herewith in full the speech which was delivered on this occasion by the Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

## SPEECH OF THE RIGHT HON. SIR WILFRID LAURIER REFUSING EXTENSION OF THE LIFE OF PARLIAMENT.]

### No Shirking of Responsibility.

Right Hon. SIR WILFRID LAURIER:

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister this afternoon, in introducing this resolution to extend the life of this Parliament for another year, made a strong appeal to me; in fact, he virtually laid upon my shoulders the responsibility for the resolution, as he hinted that if it were not to carry by a unanimous or practically unanimous vote, he should not feel warranted in giving it effect. My right hon. friend referred to the attitude which I took last year on a similar motion, and he recalled my words on that occasion when I stated—and in this he is quite agreed with me—that in the position which I occupy on the floor of this House, my responsibility before the people is almost equal, if not equal, to that of a Cabinet minister. I can say truly that upon this occasion I feel as strongly as I did then the responsibility that is upon me. I can assure my right hon. friend that I have no intention at all of shirking that responsibility indeed I am prepared to accept the responsibility to the full. I can say truly that since the war began, never did I rise with a firmer determination to be guided in the attitude which I am going to take by any other consideration than that of the welfare of the country and the supreme issue of doing our full share in this war.

### A General Election or an Extension.

The problem before us, which is involved in this resolution, is whether the call of the country will be better served and the cause of the war will be better promoted by agreeing to this resolution and extending the life of this Parliament for another year, or whether the call of the country will be better served and the cause of the war better promoted by forcing on an election which, by the letter of the constitution, must come off within a few months.

### Conditions have changed.

The situation to-day is not the same as it was last year. Since a similar motion was passed last year, many things have happened and many circumstances have arisen which had not arisen then, and those circumstances make it incumbent upon me to take a different attitude from the attitude I took then, having regard to the interest of the country and the prosecution of the war which we all have at heart. The question has long been debated in the press of the country—not of late, because the press has recently been devoting its attention to the question of conscription which is before the House—whether or not we should have an election during the war,

and the ministerial press has taken the ground that an election during the war time would be practically, if not absolutely, a national crime. Such a proposition, of course, is altogether too strong; it cannot be justified because, if accepted, it would mean that if the war were to last two, three or five years, the people would be powerless to pass judgment upon their own affairs. On the other hand, in another school of thought, many have been of the opinion that not to have an election at the proper time appointed by the Constitution would also be a national crime. The test, and the only test, to apply to a question of this kind is the old Roman maxim, *Salus populi suprema lex*—the welfare of the people and the good of the country alone is the supreme law. The cause which we all have at heart should be the only thought inspiring us in approaching this question.

### Solution differently solved in each country.

The problem before us is not confined to the Dominion of Canada. It has presented itself in nearly all the dominions of the British Empire. It has presented itself in Great Britain, in Canada, in Australia, and in New Zealand, and in no two countries has the solution been exactly alike. In Canada we have had one year of extension, but we have had no by elections for two years except such as were made necessary by a member of this House accepting a position of emolument under the Crown. There are to-day more than twenty vacancies in this House. On the other hand, in England, the Prime Minister has observed that there have been three extensions, all, by the way, for short periods, and all granted by Parliament with more or less misgiving. But in England there have been by-elections whenever a vacancy occurred; no seat was allowed to stand vacant without an appeal to the people.

### The late William Redmond and Ireland.

The last of these appeals was held under very peculiar circumstances. It was held in the country of Clare to fill the vacancy caused by the death of William Redmond, who fell gloriously on the field of battle. William Redmond had been for 20 years, if not more, a member of the British Parliament and a strong advocate of Home Rule. When the war broke out he gave up his parliamentary duties and donned the King's uniform, and no soldier rendered better service. He never appeared in Parliament since, so far as my knowledge goes, except on one occasion recently when the question of Home Rule was before the British Parliament. Then he came back from the front and took his seat in the House to urge with all his might the cause of unity in Ireland. Having discharged his