

fore Canada must not, least of all by Canadians themselves, be held up to the other nations as a slacker nation. Canada has done voluntarily, without pledge or compulsion of any kind, that which stands to her credit in this war; and I submit that it is derogating from the high reputation Canada has won in the estimation of the world through voluntary service to attempt now to substitute compulsion of any kind for the free-will offering she has already made and which she is prepared to continue to make if equality of sacrifice be established and if her people be consulted as to the leadership they desire to enforce that equality.

At this stage of the Bill it is not customary, nor is it my intention, to discuss details which can be fully dealt with in committee. I therefore propose to confine my criticism to certain outstanding objections that cannot be too strongly emphasized.

In the first place, I submit that Parliament has no mandate to pass this Bill. Elected in peace times, its constitutional term extended by itself, this Parliament exists only on sufferance and has no authority to impose harsh legislation of this kind without first consulting the electors. It is of equal importance to point out to the House and to the country that the Government has no request, no warrant from the men at the front, to introduce legislation of this character. On this point the words of the Prime Minister may profitably be recalled. He said:

I bring from that splendid manhood of Canada at the front an earnest and thrilling message that we shall stand beside them in the stress and welter of this struggle and bring them such support that the effort and sacrifice which have been consecrated to this supreme task shall not be in vain.

Stripped of its rhetoric, this pronouncement makes it quite plain that the men at the front made no request for conscription. In fact, it is not pretended that they have made a collective request of any kind. But, Mr. Speaker, whether these men asked or did not ask for support, it is our duty to see that they lack nothing which Canada can send them. That, however, as I propose to show later, does not imply that it is only by conscription that we can perform our whole duty towards those brave men who have first claim upon the physical, the moral and the material support of their grateful fellow-countrymen.

Whether the reason for introducing this Bill be advanced in precise terms or be left

to the public to infer, the impression made is the same, namely, that it has been brought down because voluntary enlistment has failed. That I deny absolutely. Voluntary enlistment did not fail, for the excellent reason that voluntary enlistment was never given a fair trial. The proof of this we have in the way things were conducted. Who can forget the rip and tear and smash—the special trains—the parades—the reviews—the crop of honorary colonels—and the noisy press agencies, of the first two years of the war? We all remember those things, and we know that while they prevailed voluntary enlistment was not and could not have been properly attended to. But apart from this, we have from the ex-Minister of Militia (Sir Sam Hughes) himself a most important statement with regard to the failure of voluntary enlistment. Speaking at Lindsay on the 28th of April last, the ex-Minister of Militia said:

More than one year ago an agitation was begun on the question of labour. We were recruiting "too many regiments"; we were "taking too many men away from work"; "munitions manufacturers and others would be at a standstill"; "farmers could not put in their crops"; and "Canada has already done her full duty," were daily recited. They unfortunately had an effect upon the Prime Minister. The result was that I was asked in March, 1916, not to press recruiting, and recruiting to-day is, and has been dead in Canada for fighting purposes. "Safety First," or the useful and well paid, but not dangerous jobs, are readily filled; but for the gallant boys in the trenches there is little or no backing.

That is a most damaging statement made by a former member of the Government, made, he alleges, because of things that happened while he was a member of that Government, and that statement reflects not only upon the Government methods and action, but upon the Prime Minister himself. Up to the present time, that statement has not been disputed. Such being the case, how can Parliament or the country be expected to accept the statement now advanced, that voluntary enlistment has failed? Equally, may I ask: How can Parliament or the country be asked to accept this Bill as a substitute for that which was not given a fair trial?

In considering this Bill we have also naturally to consider whether the Government, in the first instance, went ahead on the basis of any survey or calculation of the man-power Canada could supply in a war such as this. Evidently they did not, and it is equally evident that they have not done so even now. We are told that there are five divisions in the Canadian Army,