

wrong" is a popular version of the doctrine that the State has a right to insist upon implicit obedience, but is itself above the law and above morality. By firmly resisting this doctrine, British statesmen are doing more for the cause of liberty than would be gained by forcing a small body of conscientious objectors into the army, or by penalising them for refusing to serve.

Thus, in England the military boards took cognizance of applications made by conscientious objectors. Of course, conscientious objectors were assigned to non-combatant duties. I have here a series of trades to which they were assigned during the war. For instance, conscientious objectors could be utilized in agriculture, forestry, transport, education, public utilities, gas works, fire brigades, munition works, mills, timber yards, oil mills, flour mills, etc. Section 3, subsection 2, of the English Military Service Act, 1915, reads:

A certificate of exemption may be absolute, conditional, or temporary as the local tribunal think best suited to the case, and also in the case of an application on conscientious grounds, may take the form of an exemption from combatant service only, or may be conditional on the applicant being engaged in some work which, in the opinion of the tribunal, is of national importance.

I have here a facsimile of one of those certificates granted by the military boards in England. I will read it to the House:

This is to certify that _____ residing at _____ a Christadelphian and a recognized conscientious objector to military service, will not be called upon to join the army provided he is engaged in work of national importance such as agriculture, forestry, mining, transport, education, public utility, or such other work as may be approved of by the Committee on work of National Importance, 26 Abingdon Street, Westminster; and that he notifies in writing that he is so engaged, on the first of every month to the undersigned, at the undermentioned address.

If the holder of this certificate cease to be engaged on work such as stated above this certificate will not be valid, and he will then be called up for Military Service.

Then follows the signature of the officer. In view of the example of Great Britain, I appeal to the Acting Prime Minister (Sir Thomas White) and to the Solicitor General (Mr. Guthrie) to be merciful in these cases. There are very few of them, I understand; let us say that there were fifty or a hundred people in this country who on conscientious grounds were opposed to military service, but who nevertheless boldly and in all sincerity presented themselves before the tribunals. It seems to me that it is not good or wise policy to let these conscientious objectors languish in jail any longer. I have received many letters on this subject from different parts of the country, and I say that the least we can do, now

[Mr. Lemieux.]

that the war is over, and having before us the precedent of Great Britain and the United States, is to act generously. Consider the obnoxious effects that will be produced on these young men by confinement in the penitentiaries! I will say no more. The House will believe me, I hope, when I say that I am sincere in my advocacy of the cause of religious liberty. I am a British subject, and I take pride in my British citizenship. It has always been the pride and honour of Great Britain to lead the world in the matter of religious and civil freedom, and it is on that broad principle of tolerance and of freedom in matters religious that I appeal to the Government to be merciful to these honest and sincere young men, law-abiding citizens in every other respect, who did not default but presented themselves boldly before the tribunals and stated their objections. I leave the case in the hands of the Acting Prime Minister, and hope that he will be generous and British in his treatment of these young men.

Hon. HUGH GUTHRIE (Solicitor General): The question which my hon. friend has just presented to the House is one of some complexity, and of a good deal of difficulty. The law of Canada upon the subject is to be found in section 11 of the Military Service Act, which provides for certain exemptions. Paragraph (f) of section 11 provides:

That he conscientiously objects to the undertaking of combatant service and is prohibited from so doing by the tenets and articles of faith, in effect on the 6th day of July, 1917, of any organized religious denomination existing and well recognized in Canada at such date, and to which he in good faith belongs; and if any of the grounds of such application be established a certificate of exemption shall be granted to such man.

You will note, Mr. Speaker, that there is a wide difference between our statute and that passed by the Imperial Parliament in 1916. I do not know what the reason for the difference is, but certainly it was the opinion of this Parliament that exemption should only be granted upon the terms prescribed in our own statute. Now two things had to unite before a person in Canada could be entitled to exemption on the ground of being a conscientious objector, and those two things were, (1) that the applicant conscientiously objected, and, (2) that he was prohibited from engaging in combatant service by the tenets and articles of faith in effect on the 6th day of July, 1917, of any organized religious denomination existing and well recognized in Canada. That is our law. If the applicant objected, and his faith prohibited him from