

The Brain Growers' Guide

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DISTRIBUTE THE SACRIFICE

Since Premier Borden announced the intention of the government to introduce conscription it has been the chief subject of debate throughout Canada. It is usually accepted as a practical fact that in a time of national crisis the state is entitled to mobilize its entire resources for national defence. It is also freely declared by public men the world over that every citizen should be compelled to bear his or her full share of the national burden, and with this conclusion most people will agree. But even if these two principles are admitted, it does not even yet furnish an argument in support of conscription of men in Canada today. Practically 400,000 young men have voluntarily enlisted and have won undying honor by their great achievements on the field of battle. The government has concluded that voluntary enlistment has reached its limit and compulsion must be established. But before tearing 100,000 young men from their homes and forcing them to sacrifice their lives for the rest of the people, the responsibility of such an action should be carefully weighed. Men are only one factor in determining the result of the war. Money is the other chief factor, for with it can be supplied food and munitions. Has the government of Canada done its duty in distributing the burden upon those who remain at home? We believe not.

It is easy to understand that Premier Borden and other members of the government who have visited the firing line in France, and been eye witnesses of the heroic deeds and sacrifices of our soldiers, have come home with the one idea of sending across more soldiers. But we do not believe that either Premier Borden or the other members of his government have fully realized the grave responsibility they accept in actually compelling young men to enter the army. Has Premier Borden and the other members of the government made any sacrifice in the slightest way approaching the sacrifice they are demanding of 100,000 young men? Premier Borden is reputed to be a millionaire and has no children. The Hon. Robert Rogers, Sir Edward Kemp and Sir Thomas White are reputed to be wealthy men and there are a number of very wealthy men in the government party. These men live in luxury today and we will venture that not one of them has made a sacrifice that is really serious. None of them would be expected to join the army. They are needed to conduct the affairs of the country. But let them give up their wealth when they ask other men to give up their lives. Let this national burden be adjusted in some measure on an equitable basis.

The soldiers who have already gone to the front have left their families at home. Since the war began the government has raised the tariff tax on practically all of the necessities of life. The families of these soldiers are being taxed to pay for the war while their husbands and sons are giving their lives on the battlefield. But those soldiers who return will still be taxed to pay for the cost of the war, towards which they have already done more than their share. Any man who fights for his country on the battlefields of France and Belgium should, if he returns, be exempted from the payment of all taxes incurred by the war. And while he is fighting, his family should enjoy the same immunity, but this is impossible under our Canadian taxing system.

In demanding conscription the government is forcing a select few to make the sublime national sacrifice, while hundreds of thousands of others in Canada are actually making profit out of the war. Practically all the money for the war is being borrowed and the burden of repayment is being shouldered onto the future.

Before demanding conscription the government should tax every person in Canada to the full limit of his ability to pay, and should conscript the wealth of those who have it before conscripting human lives.

Another factor which is overlooked is that conscription is forcing young men into moral dangers, the horrors of which cannot be imagined. Statements in the British House of Commons show that our soldiers in training camps in England are surrounded by temptation which has absolutely ruined thousands of men. They will never see the firing line, yet they will come back to Canada in a far worse condition than many of those who have been wounded. This responsibility rests largely upon British authorities, and it is gratifying to know that Premier Borden has reprimanded the British authorities for their laxness in this respect.

We have in Canada a large number of people whose sympathies are with the enemy, who contribute nothing to our patriotic funds and are paying no taxation whatever except by the tariff. They are growing comparatively wealthy and the government is doing nothing to make them pay their fair share of the burden. The idle land all over Canada held by the speculator is paying not one red cent towards the cost of the war. Yet when the war is over and the immigration comes that many people expect, these speculators, many of whom are foreigners, will pocket their profits at the expense of the people of Canada. Here is an opportunity for taxation that the government is overlooking.

While the record of the government is such that they are not justified in conscripting the bodies and practically the lives of 100,000 young men, we do not believe that the situation would have been greatly, if any, improved by changing the government. The whole Canadian viewpoint seems to be wrong. Human life is held very lightly, while wealth is sacred. Our governments have always placed money on a higher plane than human life. They will lightly step in and demand a huge sacrifice of life before they will demand even a moderate sacrifice of wealth. The present government does not represent the people of Canada. It was elected to power six years ago, and if an election were held tomorrow it would undoubtedly be overwhelmingly defeated; but such a defeat would be a catastrophe at the present time. The government ought to be big enough to take in members of the opposition and some men outside of parliament, to constitute a real representative government. We should have a national government in a national crisis, and before conscription goes into effect the people of Canada should have a voice in it through a referendum, as they did in Australia.

INCOME TAX COMING

In the course of discussion in the House of Commons the other day, Sir Thomas White, finance minister, stated that it was quite possible and even probable that an income tax would be necessary in Canada before the war was over. What he means by "necessary" we do not know, but in the opinion of ninety per cent. of the people of Canada we believe that necessity arrived some time ago and that the government is far behind public opinion in the matter of taxation. In heaven's name what is the government waiting for? It really looks as though Sir Thomas White is waiting until all the wealthy men have put their money into war bonds, where it cannot be taxed, and then he will bring in his income tax. Another consideration is that protectionists as a rule are not very partial to income tax, because it

shows how revenues can be raised without the aid of tariff. One of the great protectionist arguments has always been that the tariff is necessary to produce revenues, and they therefore discourage plans which show that revenues can be produced easily and plentifully by other means. If Sir Thomas White really thinks that an income tax may be necessary before the war is over, he should be convinced that it is necessary right now.

LIBERAL TARIFF VIEWS

In the House of Commons last week the Hon. Frank Oliver, former minister of the interior, moved the following resolution:

"That in the opinion of this House it would be in the public interest if the customs tariff act were so amended as to provide that:

Wheat, wheat flour and all other products of wheat be placed upon the free list.

That farm implements and machinery, farm tractors, mining, flour and sawmill machinery, and repairs for same, rough and partly dressed lumber, illuminating, lubricating and fuel oils, cement and fertilizers be added to the free list.

That staple foods and food products (other than wheat and flour), domestic animals and foods therefor be admitted into Canada free of duty when coming from and being the product of any country admitting like Canadian articles into such country free of duty.

That substantial reductions be made in the general tariff on all articles imported into Canada, excepting luxuries.

That the British preference be increased to 50 per cent. of the general tariff."

This resolution goes a long way to meet the tariff planks in the farmers' platform, and if it were adopted and enacted into legislation it would bring great relief to the people of Canada and would greatly stimulate all kinds of production. But of course the government will vote it down, as Mr. Oliver expected they would do when he introduced it. This is the most progressive tariff platform that has been put forward by any political party in the House of Commons since 1896. The longer the Liberal party stays in opposition the more progressive and democratic it becomes. Prior to 1896 the Liberal party was a veritable engine of democracy. Once it got into power, however, it became as reactionary as its opponents and practiced protection, fostered trusts and combines and catered to the big interests from 1896 to 1911. The difficulty is, as Mr. Knowles says, that the majority of the Liberal party are not liberals except in name. There is a minority in favor of real democracy. Most of these come from the West, though we are glad to know that there is a number of them in the East also. The great hope is that the real democrats in the Liberal party will carry on their educational work until public opinion is roused to the point where the party in power, whichever it may be, will be forced to respond. In the debate on this resolution, W. A. Buchanan, the member for Lethbridge, strongly advocated income tax and a tax on land values. He wanted to see a tax on undeveloped lands which would force the speculators to release them so that they could become productive. The vacant land of Western Canada, instead of being the great boon for which the Creator provided it, has turned out to be one of the greatest curses that ever fell upon a civilized country. That can be remedied by taxation, and our Western members are forcing the government to give it attention.

FORCE OF PUBLIC OPINION

It is always interesting to watch the action of the politicians when public opinion becomes decidedly in favor of any reform. Perhaps the recent woman suffrage movement is one of the best illustrations of the case. When the movement began in real earnest a few years ago practically all the politicians were at heart