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CANADA

House of Commons Debates

OFFICIAL REPORT.

SPEECH

OF

HON. C. J. DOHERTY

Minister of Justice

ON

The Military Service Act, 1917

In the House of Commons, Ottawa, on Thursday, July 5, 1917.

Hon. C. J. DOHERTY (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend from Montcalm (Mr. Lafortune), who has showered me with some compliments, and who made some observations with regard to me not quite so complimentary, will pardon me if I do not undertake to take up seriatim the different matters which he has dealt with in his somewhat prolonged address. The question with which we are concerned presents itself to my mind from a very different point of view from that from which the hon. gentleman evidently looks at it. I may have occasion to refer, as I proceed, to one or two of the subjects to which he has adverted, but he will forgive me if, before doing that, I say something that seems to me vital to be said in connection with the consideration of this very momentous question. More than one hon. gentleman in this House has already said—and many of them among those who are supporting this measure—that the idea of compulsion in itself was repugnant to them. Some of them have gone further and claimed to entertain a special and superlative repugnance to it. Let me say that none among them more than I finds it repugnant in itself.

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And when I say it is repugnant in itself, let it be understood that I do not mean to say merely that it is repugnant to me, looking at it from the point of view of my being the person, or among the persons, to be subjected to it. It is repugnant to me in that sense, but it is vastly more so to find myself in a position where it becomes my duty to be one among those who say that now, and at this time, it is necessary that compulsion, in the manner provided in this Bill, should be imposed upon others, in order that Canada may do her entire duty, and that she may do it in the method which shall so operate as to make the performance of that duty impair, in the least possible degree, the performance of other duties that are incumbent upon her and her people to-day, and impose upon her—although that is a secondary consideration—the least possible sacrifice.

5 p.m. Mr. Speaker, duty is the subject of my story. I have listened to a large part of this debate, I have read the remarks of those hon. gentlemen whom it was not my privilege to hear, and let me say to you in all frankness, that I have waited till this moment in this debate

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