

will divide with you, man for man, political power in this country. Not only that, but, in order that we may do our part in this war in this the only way it can be done, we are ready to discuss with you other matters, ready to meet you and adopt a course that is fair as between the ideals of both parties." The Prime Minister has repeated that assurance in this debate. The spirit that animated those negotiations still exists, and has not been exchanged for another. What more can we do? While we would do almost anything to avoid the disaster of disunion, we cannot purchase union at the price of national disgrace.

My only effort has been to lay before hon. gentlemen in this Chamber a statement of the spirit in which the Government has approached this matter, to lay before them our policy and, if I could to establish that policy as right and just, and to express our overpowering determination to do our duty, as we see it, in this grave and terrible crisis. Speaking on behalf of hon. gentlemen on this side of the House, I pay my tribute to the clear vision and courage of the hon. member for South Wellington (Mr. Guthrie), and the hon. member for West Lambton (Mr. Pardee). I say to them that they have, in a manner that we will long remember, discharged to their utmost their obligation to prevent discord and strife. The speeches they have made will place their names high in the roll of honour in Canada, to be seen and remembered for generations to come. I appeal to hon. gentlemen opposite, and to hon. gentlemen around me, for party divisions as we once had them are not just the same to-day—I appeal to all hon. members to take the course which, in my belief, alone can command the respect of this House, of Canada, and of the world.

Hon. CHARLES MURPHY (Russell): Mr. Speaker, the slogan in the country to-day is, "win the war." That slogan will be the key-note of my criticism of the measure under consideration by the House. It has been made all the easier for me to adopt that slogan as the key-note of my criticism by reason of the fact that the first citizen from the county which I have the honour to represent in this House who offered up his young life in the great struggle which is convulsing the world was a young French Canadian, a boy named Hector Filion. Other citizens of that county representing divers races and creeds have since followed that French boy's example, until to-day the casualty-honour roll of the county of Russell, like

[Mr. Meighen.]

that of so many other counties in this Dominion, is distressingly large.

At the outset, may I be permitted to say—not in a boastful spirit; not as asserting any claim that may not with equal truth be asserted by every hon. gentleman in this House—that in a desire to help win this war, I yield to no man in Canada. For that reason, Sir, if I object to the Bill brought down by the Government, it is because I am profoundly convinced that in its principle as well as in its application that measure will hinder rather than help in winning the war. My reasons for that conviction, Sir, I will place before you and before my colleagues in this House as briefly as possible.

It will not detract in the slightest degree from the gravity of the matter that we have in hand if I say that it was in accordance with the traditions of the day that the Prime Minister, without consultation and without deliberation, on New Year's Day, 1916, took the resolution, and then publicly announced, that Canada would contribute 500,000 men to the Army of the Allies. Like other resolutions formed by other people on a like occasion, the Prime Minister has found it impossible to carry out this. Because of that failure he now asks Parliament to help him out of his difficulty by enacting this Bill.

The Prime Minister's difficulty does not appear now for the first time, nor is the Bill before the House the first attempt to relieve him of it. That difficulty presented itself very shortly after the Prime Minister's promise was made. In an endeavour to extricate himself, the right hon. gentleman last summer created the National Service Board, but it was speedily found that the cure was no better than the disease. Now, rather than admit his double failure, the Prime Minister proposes another remedy no more efficacious than the former one. That, Sir, is the condition with which we have to deal.

For the purpose of the argument that I wish to develop, let me point out that in making a promise not based on data of any kind the Prime Minister might have undertaken to send 600,000 or 700,000 men with just as much reason as he had for promising to send 500,000 men. Had he

chanced to promise either of those larger numbers, could it be contended, as it is contended in the case of the 500,000, that Canada had failed to fulfil her pledge? Canada made no pledge; that the Prime Minister frankly admits. Canada was not consulted; there-