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## The Journal of Commerce

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### Special Articles

- The World's Crop Outlook for 1917,  
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- The Buyer's Functions in the Retail Business,  
By W. W. Swanson, Ph.D.
- Banking and Business Affairs in the U. S.,  
By Elmer H. Youngman.
- Comments on Current Commerce,  
By E. S. Bates.
- Conditions in the West,  
By E. Cora Hind.

### PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

| Editorials:                                     | Page. |
|---|-------|
| Conscription .....                              | 1     |
| The Irish Question .....                        | 1     |
| The Need of a Food Dictator .....               | 2     |
| Australia .....                                 | 2     |
| Great Britain's Part .....                      | 2     |
| The Situation in Russia .....                   | 3     |
| Conditions in the West .....                    | 4     |
| The World's Crop Outlook .....                  | 4     |
| Banking and Business Affairs in the U.S. ....   | 5     |
| The Buyer's Functions in the Retail Business .. | 6     |
| Public Opinion .....                            | 7     |
| Mentioned in Despatches .....                   | 8     |
| Among the Companies .....                       | 9     |
| Bank of Montreal Half Yearly Report .....       | 11    |
| Sterling Bank Show Increase in Business .....   | 12    |
| Make Gifts, Not Loans, says Bourke Cockran ..   | 13    |
| Book Reviews .....                              | 14    |
| "A Little Nonsense Now and Then" .....          | 15    |
| Big Business Does not Always Pay .....          | 17    |
| Europe's Necessity Canada's Opportunity .....   | 18    |
| Comments on Current Commerce .....              | 19    |
| Commodity Markets .....                         | 21-22 |

## Conscription

THE important part of Sir Robert Borden's speech in the House of Commons on Friday was that respecting military conscription in Canada. Of course, he had to give some account of the Imperial Conference, which he had attended on the invitation of the British Government, but what he had to say on that subject was, necessarily and through no fault of his, very largely a case of much ado about nothing. His announcement that the Government had decided that from fifty to one hundred thousand men must be raised for the war by some form of selective conscription was of the utmost importance, and will open up a wide field of discussion, though the question can hardly be fully and intelligently considered until the outlines, at least, of the method proposed are laid before the public.

There will be many in every Province of the Dominion who will receive Sir Robert Borden's announcement with unqualified approval. Many others, however, will hesitate to express such endorsement. The principle of conscription is something so different from what our people have been accustomed to in the past that many will be inclined to regard it as at variance with the essential elements of our citizenship, and even in the face of the urgent reasons advanced by Sir Robert Borden they will probably still oppose it. Some, no doubt, will think that Canada should be as careful in the matter as Australia, where even such a strong Imperialist as Mr. Hughes felt that conscription should not be resorted to until it had received the approval of the people by a direct vote. There was a referendum in Australia which resulted in the defeat of the conscription proposal, although Australians generally were heart and soul with the mother country in their desire to carry on the war. Many there will be who will doubt whether such a very exceptional step as that of conscription can be effectively taken through the machinery of party government, in which, it would seem, the question of party patronage enters almost every movement. All these and other views of the subject will be presented in the discussion that is opened up.

While there will thus be many points on which differences will arise, it cannot be denied that the need of more men for service at the front is as urgent as Sir Robert Borden states it to be, and if those who are closest to the recent efforts to obtain the men by the volunteer system come to the conclusion that it can no longer serve the purpose, it will not be easy to resist the argument that some measure of compulsion, under some authority that will command the confidence of the public generally, will be necessary if Canada is to continue to do her full duty to herself and to the Empire.

Once in a while—not often, we are glad to say—one hears the question, "Has not Canada done enough? Has she not sent a sufficiently large number of her sons to the front?" Canada has indeed done wonders. For a people, nine-tenths of whom had practically no knowledge of military affairs, to raise, equip and send to the theatres of war several hundred thousand men; to put a large part of these in the very forefront of the hardest battles, and to have them acquit themselves honorably, heroically, alongside the finest soldiers of Europe—that is something of which every Canadian may well be proud. But the case that now presents itself is not one for arithmetical calculation, or rules of proportion. When the house is afire, we do not stop to calculate how many buckets of water each member of the family ought to bring. Each and every member is bound to do the utmost to extinguish the conflagration. That is our position to-day, as a young nation within the British Empire. While in many respects the progress of the war is satisfactory, it would be folly to suppose that victory has already been won, or that the end is near. There can be but one end—the triumph of democratic civilization over an almost barbarous military autocracy. But that end can only be reached by continued and increased effort on the part of Great Britain and the Allies. While Canada's forces have played a noble part in the war, it has been at a heavy cost of blood. Thousands of the flower of Canadian manhood have given up their lives for the cause of right. Their places should be filled, to the end that the sacrifices of the past may not have been in vain. Let the efforts to obtain volunteers continue; let us hope that they will be more fruitful than they have been of late; perhaps the present movement may accelerate volunteering; but if there is not the necessary response, there will be an unanswerable case for some form of conscription.

## The Irish Question

MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S Government must be credited with having made an earnest effort to find a solution of the Irish problem through their recent proposal to grant Home Rule to Ireland, excluding six Ulster counties. True, such a solution is not quite in harmony with what Mr. Lloyd George himself, as a member of the Asquith Government, agreed to when the Home Rule Act, now suspended, was placed on the statute book. But such a proposal emanating from a Government of which Sir Edward Carson is a member marks a considerable advance and indicates a disposition on his part to make some concession towards a settlement. The proposal has been received with scant favor on all sides and for the moment nothing may come of it. The alternative suggestion of Mr. Lloyd George for