

SIR WILFRID LAURIER AT MONTREAL

Speech on Call for Recruits for French-Canadian Regiment

AT Sohmer Park, Montreal, October 15, on the occasion of the public meeting in the interest of recruiting of the French-Canadian regiment which will form a part of the second Canadian Overseas contingent, upward of 15,000 people applauded the notable speech of Sir Wilfrid Laurier in which the Liberal Leader uttered a clarion call to service and sacrifice in the cause of the Empire.

On the platform at Sohmer Park with Sir Wilfrid were representatives of both political parties, including Sir Lomer Gouin, Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux, Senator Dandurand, Senator Belcourt, Mr. L. T. Marechal, Hon. T. Chase Casgrain, Mr. J. N. Tellier and others whose presence testified to the fact that party politics had been forgotten and buried in the hour of the Empire's need. Members of the Dominion Cabinet, including Sir Robert Borden, Hon. Mr. Coderre and Hon. L. P. Pelletie were invited and expected to take part in the meeting, but found it necessary to send regrets.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who was greeted with a demonstration such as rarely comes to a Canadian from Canadians, said:

"Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

I do not know if this great hall recognizes me but I know it well. I have had the honour to come here several times in various circumstances. Although the circumstances are not the same this time, I am happy to know that the heart of the City of Montreal is still in the right place.

Dramatic Moment.

"I have seen many manifestations in my life, many manifestations of different kinds, but never have I seen one under circumstances so memorable as this evening. There are on this platform men who are not used to appear together at meetings, men who, up to the present time, had been separated from each other by differences of opinion that might have been thought to be irreconcilable, men who, not very long ago, were engaged in a heated discussion over the question of the participation or the non-participation of Canada in the defence of the Empire and who to-day, at this moment, forgetting these differences, all stand together, ready to declare that Canada must take part in this great war, the object of which is to drive the Germans out of France and Belgium, or, to use a stronger expression, as Joan of Arc said, "to butt the Germans out of France".

"To-day, thank God, the conditions are not the same as they were in the time of Joan of Arc; those who were the foes of France at that time are now her friends and the two proud nations fight side by side in this War, the object of which is not only to assert the honour of France and the independence of Belgium, but also to fight for civilization against barbarism.

How terrible is this war in which half the world is engaged! To find a similar one, one has to go back at least fourteen hundred years, one has to go back to Attila, this barbarian whom awe-stricken populations use to call "the curse of God".

The Duty of the Hour.

"We have to-day the official statement that the Government proposes to send a corps of 30,000 men to Europe. French-Canadians know that they owe it to themselves to organize a separate corps, in order to show their loyalism, to show that they have not forgotten the land of their ancestors. This is what brings me here to-night. You have asked me to come and help you to form this regiment; I am ready to help you with all my heart.

The Call of Duty.

"This call addressed to our race involves a sacrifice. We are calling the young men in particular, and to you, young men, I have only one thing to say: I envy you.

We are asking you for a great sacrifice, and it may be expected that some few of the regiment will remain over there, victims to their courage, but they shall sleep in the land of their ancestors. But we shall not let ourselves be influenced by such a consideration. When Dollard and his seventeen companions left to save the young colony, they knew that they would not come back and their courage grew with the hope of a triumphant death. If there are still a few drops of the blood of Dollard and his companions in the veins of the Canadians who are present at this meeting, you will enlist in a body, for this cause is just as sacred as the one for which Dollard and his companions gave their lives.

We Are Free.

"This is a voluntary sacrifice, Great Britain asks nothing of us. She accepts with gratitude what we do for her but she does not set any obligation upon us. Once more I repeat, Canada is a free country. If some Canadians were frightened by the monster of conscription in the past, they must now recognize that this monster was a myth. I have not come here to discuss if our participation in the war is in accordance with the Constitution; this is not what I came here for. I have pledged myself to say nothing politically, and I will remain faithful to this pledge. I confess that never more than to-night would I have liked to discuss the question of the navy, but I will say nothing about it. I am a party man, I will not conceal this fact, but it is because I am a party man that I am a patriot.

No Politics.

"Let us leave this question until the war is over. I will tell what I have come here for: I have come