

at the front by a continuation of the voluntary system. The hon. gentleman who has just sat down (Mr. Pardee) and who has delivered an address which will long live in the records of this Parliament, has suggested that, at all events under the shadow of this Bill, more men may be secured. I do not doubt that that is true; possibly under the shadow of this Bill more men will enlist, under a sort of voluntary system. But that emphasizes, does not destroy, the necessity for the Bill. Who can contend, with justification, that the voluntary system has not been adequately tried in Canada, both as to vigour of effort and as to length of time? The member for St. John (Mr. Pugsley), if I understood correctly an interruption that he made yesterday, feels that the voluntary system is now doing enough. Well, for twelve months it has produced an average of 6,000, or 7,000 men a month, while the wastage in Canada and in England amounts to a very substantial portion of that figure. In the two months through which we have just passed, the voluntary system yielded us not one man for four of those who were casualties among our armies in France. Add the casualties in France and the wastage in England to the wastage in Canada, and it is as plain as any rule of arithmetic that further reliance on the voluntary system will in time—perhaps in a very short time—so reduce our forces that we shall have no substantial representation in the war.

It has been suggested that everything has not been done that might have been done. Perhaps that is so, all I know is that we have done everything that we were able to devise, that the resources of the Administration were able to evolve, to make the voluntary system successful. Has there been during the whole course of this debate a suggestion of any practical step that might have been taken and which was not taken to make the voluntary system successful? I have not heard one. Was there not

4 p.m. a sufficient number of recruiting officers? Were the recruiting officers not the proper men? In some cases, perhaps, they were not; no Government that ever existed could select in every particular case the proper man. There may have been an English recruiting officer in Montreal, but there were French recruiting officers as well in Montreal. One would think, listening to the hon. member for Rouville (Mr. Lemieux) that the only man commissioned to recruit in Montreal was the Methodist minister of whom he

[Mr. Meighen.]

complained. I obtained to-day from the Militia Department a list of recruiting officers in the province of Quebec and in the city of Montreal. When I got that list I thought they had sent me a list of French-Canadian recruits; the number was almost legion. I will not weary the House by reading the list; it is sufficient to say that there was no discrimination whatsoever. I am sure that hon. gentlemen on both sides of the House know that to be the fact.

Was there not sufficient earnestness in the carrying on of the voluntary system? I do not think that the earnestness displayed by the adherents of this party excelled in any degree the earnestness of many adherents of the party represented by hon. gentlemen opposite. And I believe each was as generously manifested in every part of Canada as it was in Manitoba or Ontario. I know of no resource that was not adopted; the system became at last one which was a system of voluntary enlistment only in a very modified and attenuated sense. It became a system rather of conscription by cajolery—and not altogether too creditable to Canada. Consequently, speaking from the viewpoint, not only of the Government, but of the Dominion, there is no other way of getting men than by adopting this measure. The men must be had; we have them to send, and there is no other way of procuring them and sending them. The business of the country, therefore, is, by this system, to get the men and to send them overseas.

In objection to this course it is urged that, however essential it may be or whatever may be our physical power to accomplish it, we are restrained by constitutional limitations from performing this duty. I will not burden the discussion with a long, wire-drawn argument as to our powers. Every one who wants to face this issue rather than evade it will admit that if we have not the constitutional power, we had better get it; and there is nowhere to get it except in this House. Who, except ourselves, can legislate constitutional validity into what we desire to do? The Parliament of Great Britain is as powerless to do so as is the Parliament of France. The Parliament of Canada has full constitutional power. If the law is not right, surely it is our duty to put the law right with the least possible delay. But the law in principle is right. The law, as it stands at present is quite sufficient to enable us to act, except from this point of view: the Militia Act enables us to get men compulsorily by a system of hit and miss, of selection by lot. It does