

vince that I was irreconcilably opposed to any kind of compulsory service and pledged myself to combat it in every possible way. This year, on the Sunday after the Prime Minister had stated his policy, I forthwith announced to the electors of my parish that I was as opposed as ever I was to conscription of any kind and recalled the pledge I had given in 1916.

When I made these statements, there was no question of conscription at all, and I was then acting freely, knowing I was acting in the best interests of my constituents as well as of my country.

As soon as the Prime Minister had announced to this House his intention of introducing a new war policy, the popular sentiment, which had been in favour of the war, was completely modified to such an extent that it has become hostile to any participation in the present war. In all sections of the country, protests were made at public meetings, and numerous petitions have been sent to the members of this House.

With your leave, Mr. Speaker, I will read the copy of a resolution adopted by the council of the parish of Ste. Genevieve of Berthier, strongly protesting against this conscription Bill, and which reads as follows:

At a general meeting of the municipal council of the parish of Sainte Geneviève de Berthier, held in the city of Berthier, at the council's regular meeting place, on Tuesday, the fifth day of June, 1917, at 8 o'clock a.m., in accordance with the provisions of the Quebec Municipal Code; at which were present: His Honour the Mayor, J. F. Fernet, and Councillors Charles Denis, Arthur Ducharme, Octavien Lavallée and Paul Savignac, forming a quorum of the said council, His Honour the Mayor chairman. Councillor Ducharme moved, seconded by Councillor Denis, and it was unanimously resolved:

Whereas, Sir Robert L. Borden, Prime Minister of Canada, has declared in the House of Commons that he will submit a Bill providing for a system of selective conscription for the overseas military service:

Whereas, the sending across the seas of Canadian troops has already seriously compromised the country's economic situation, and whereas it is in the interest, both of Canada and the Empire and its allies, that the Canadian population should turn all its energies to promoting agricultural and manufacturing industries;

Whereas, since the beginning of the war raging in Europe, Sir Robert L. Borden has declared in the House of Commons, at different times, and particularly on January 17, 1916, that the Government did not intend to adopt conscription;

Whereas, the cost of living is ever increasing, it would be more proper for the Canadian Government to take the necessary measures towards improving agricultural conditions;

Therefore, this Council, interpreting the unanimous feelings of the population of the parish of Sainte Geneviève de Berthier, strongly protests, both in its own name and on behalf of

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the said parish's entire population, against the imposition of conscription, without previously consulting the people, either by means of a referendum or through general elections, and that copies of the present resolution be sent to the Prime Minister of Canada, the Honourable Sir Robert L. Borden, to the leader of the Opposition, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, to our representative at Ottawa, Mr. J. A. Barrette; and be it further resolved that the Dominion member be instructed to vote against any conscription proposal.

A true copy of the resolution passed by the municipal council of the parish of Sainte Geneviève de Berthier, taken from the book of proceedings, and in my custody, as secretary-treasurer.

(Signed) J. A. Lavallée,  
Secretary-Treasurer.

To this resolution of protest, I have answered as follows:

To Mr. J. A. Lavallée, notary,  
Secretary-Treasurer of the parish of Berthier,  
Berthierville.

Dear Mr. Lavallée,

I have duly received copy of the resolution of the municipal council of the parish of Sainte Geneviève de Berthier.

I congratulate you upon your civic spirit, and I am convinced that it was through your enlightened patriotism that this resolution was unanimously passed, and that you have really at heart the interests of the French Canadian race.

I beg leave, Mr. Secretary, to repeat to you the statement I made last fall at a large meeting held at Berthierville, in the presence of 6,000 electors of the county, and from its vicinity, where I stated that I was completely opposed to conscription. This year, on the Sunday following the declaration made by the Prime Minister of Canada, I alike stated publicly in my own parish that I was altogether opposed to this Government measure. I then acted freely, knowing I was doing so in the best interest of my constituents.

I sincerely hope this declaration will rejoice the heart of all the true French Canadians of my county and of my province.

Please accept, my dear friend, the expression of my highest sentiments and believe me,  
Yours most truly,

(Signed) J. A. Barrette.

Ottawa, June 6, 1917.

Similar requests from the parishes of Lavaltrie, Lonoraie, St. Gabriel de Brandon, St. Norbert and St. Barthelemi, have alike been addressed to me. To all these requests, I have made the same answer as I have just read to the members of this House. I have likewise sent to every municipal secretary of my county a copy of said letter. That must clearly show you that I have always been, by principle and in fact, against the conscription which it is desired to impose upon us to-day. I know that this bold and strong attitude of mine will probably be diversely interpreted by some political friends, as my county has been particularly favoured, as far as Public Works are concerned.

May I be allowed to tell the House that since 1911 until the present day my county