

beauty, I am ready to lay down my life. Fearing for its future, I shall vote for the amendment of my hon. leader, that the military act now proposed be submitted to the people, for its approval or its disapproval, trusting in the wisdom of the popular verdict and ready to submit to it. It is as a Canadian loving his country, desirous of seeing peace and happiness reign over it, as these are indispensable conditions of a happy future for the nation, that I conclude these remarks by asking the hon. Prime Minister to take them into serious consideration and by declaring that I am against the principle of forcing others to do a thing which I would not want to do myself, that is to say, I am against any kind of compulsory service, and I shall vote accordingly.

Mr. EDMOND PROULX (Prescott): Mr. Speaker, I shall take the advice of the right hon. the Prime Minister (Sir Robert Borden) and promise to be brief, but I cannot promise that I will take his advice any further in reference to this matter. Had the question not been so important I would have been satisfied to have given a silent vote, but the matter being of so much importance, and establishing a new principle in our traditions and policies, I consider that it is incumbent upon me to give the reasons for the vote that I am about to cast in a few minutes. When this war was declared in 1914 the Prime Minister made an offer to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and the people of this country agreed to that offer. The response was very generous. Parliament was called, and did not object to the offer which had been made. It unanimously voted the money that was asked by the Government to enable the Government to send across one contingent and more if it was thought necessary. When the Prime Minister made the offer he did not intend to apply the Militia Act, which he said the other day could have been applied, but as my right hon. friend the leader of the Opposition (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) proved to this House the other day he made the offer to the British Government on the understanding that our soldiers would serve as British troops under the British Crown. The Prime Minister had grave doubts that the Militia Act would apply, or that the defence of Canada was at stake. If the defence of Canada was not at stake in 1914, how can it be said that it was at stake in 1917? Canada is not now more menaced than it was in 1914, and although Parliament may have power to pass this

[Mr. Marcile.]

Bill, I am of the opinion, with my right hon. friend the leader of the Opposition, that Parliament has no right, has no mandate, to pass this measure. It has never been before the people. At the last general election in 1911 this Government came into power on the policy which was preached in the province of Quebec of no participation in the wars of Great Britain. You may say that this is not a war of Great Britain. I admit it is not. I am not one of those who say that we must not fight for Great Britain. This war was not declared by Great Britain. Great Britain was not prepared for war, and it is to the credit of Great Britain that she went into this war to protect Belgium and to honour her signature to the treaty which was made in 1839.

But that does not change the situation, and it does not prove that it is Canada's war. I maintain that Parliament has not the right to pass this law for sending Canadians to go across seas to take part in this war. There was no question in the session of 1914 that it was a free offer which the Government was making to the Government of Great Britain. It was an offer which similar to the one which was made in 1899 by the Government of that day at the time of the South African war. The only difference was that the number of troops and the expenditure were much larger. But Parliament was not asked to send these troops under the Militia Act. I am not going to read the despatches which were sent. Members of this House must remember them. They were read the other day by the leader of the Opposition. The first one was sent on the 1st August, 1914, and the second on the 5th August. The Government had five days to consider the matter and though they had five days to consider it they did not change their mind. They still had grave doubts as to whether our soldiers could be sent across as Canadian troops and they preferred to send them as Imperial troops. Parliament assented to the request of the Government and at subsequent sessions Parliament voted freely and unanimously the moneys which were asked by the Government to permit equipping and sending the troops overseas. The Prime Minister made a promise on the 1st January, 1916, without consulting Parliament. It is said that in Germany the Chancellor is the mouthpiece of the Kaiser and that he presents to the Reichstag the policies which the Kaiser wants him to present.

It seemed that at that time the ex-Minister of Militia was the Kaiser of Canada, and that the Prime Minister was the mouth-