

of this country. I point to the provisions of the Bill. This is not the time to discuss it in detail, but a few words will, I think, make my meaning apparent to everybody. It is framed and it is advanced in no spirit of recrimination whatsoever, in no spirit of petty jealousy, because the real men of this country, from end to end, are not of that feeling and do not want that feeling expressed by this Bill. We of English-speaking Canada have the kindest feelings towards our French Canadian compatriots. We realize that there are certain considerations having to do with this subject of recruiting that apply to them that do not apply with the same force to us. I want to say to the members from Quebec that this Bill as drafted is not intended to, and will not, if I understand the Bill, work unfairly to that province. Rather, on the other hand, for just and good reasons—not because that province desires any favouritism and it gets no favouritism but for just and good reasons, this Bill in its results will work more lightly on the province of Quebec than on any other province in Canada. In what way will it work more lightly? In the first place, the province of Quebec is an agricultural province. A much larger proportion of its population is engaged in agriculture than is the case at least with any other of the older provinces of Canada. Agriculture is one of our essential industries, our greatest essential industry, necessarily employing much the largest proportion of our population. Consequently, under the terms of the Bill, the exemptions to agriculture will far outnumber the exemptions to other avocations of our people. Therefore, the exemption clauses, applied evenly and fairly all over this Dominion, as is the intent, will, for just and good and sound reasons, be of more value to the province of Quebec than to any other province of Canada.

Secondly, in the province of Quebec, the young men marry at an earlier age than in the English provinces. It is a custom that deserves commendation. How does that affect the operation of this Act? Under this Act, the first three classes to be called out embrace only unmarried men between the ages of 20 and 34. Under those three classes it is not impossible that the whole 100,000 may be secured, and, in that case, the Act will apply to a smaller proportion in the province of Quebec than in any other province. This, however, is the case not because the Bill makes favourites, but because the Bill is fair. It is in the general interests of the state.

Consequently, this Bill, so far from being designed or framed to result in unfairness to the province of Quebec, will, on the contrary, in its practical effects, for good and sufficient reasons of state, fall more lightly on Quebec than on any other province.

We as a people have a right to deliberate, and to vote, to negative, if we so desire, any proposition which is still open and left for us to decide. But surely the prosecution of this war with the whole might of Canada is not a subject which is now left to us to decide. That question has been passed upon. Its prosecution is now a matter only of good faith: 300,000 living men and 20,000 dead are over there, the hostages of our good faith. All that is left to us now is a choice between fidelity and desertion, between courage and poltroonery, between honour and everlasting shame.

We are told this action will result in disunion. I see no reason why it should produce disunion. It is framed to avoid disunion. But let no man deceive himself. We do not avoid disunion by dropping back to where we were, any more than we avoid disunion by going ahead with this measure. I see no more peril in the one course than in the other. At all events, I see no more peril in honourably marching on. You might possibly have union by stepping back, and letting the voluntary system, dead as Julius Cæsar, continue in force. I do not think you would. But if you did it would be the concord of inertia and of lassitude—the concord of disgrace. There is no reason in this measure for disunion, and I do not think that result will come. I am as confident as I have ever been of anything in my life that if the members of this House, reading and studying this Bill, and hearing this debate, will go to their constituents and tell them the meaning, purpose and spirit of this Bill there will be no possibility whatever of discord or resistance. It is not the substance, but the name of the Bill that has become a bogey.

We are ready, on our part, to do much to avoid the danger of disunion. This Government has shown that spirit from the beginning of this crisis. We have been ready to pay a great price, to make a big sacrifice, if, by that price or sacrifice, we could avoid even the possibility of disunion in Canada. The leader of the Government has said to the great leader of the French Canadian race: "I will share with you the reins of power. Though elected here, as we have been, by the votes of the people, I