

the West is not only tired of but can no longer ante for others as well as for herself under this system.

I am writing in a B. C. mountain valley, from which, out of a voters' list of some eleven hundred names, nearly four hundred men have gone overseas. I am not claiming a record for it. Other places have done the like. But I cite it as an instance of a community which has its whole effectual stack in the game already.

I know these men. They were and are good men, most of them engaged in productive industries—ranchers, miners, lumbermen and the like. A large proportion are married, with families. The cost of sending a family man overseas very properly includes a generous subsistence for his family in his absence. But it is not only improper but plain, foolish waste to send men at the extra cost of a subsistence allowance when there are others in the country whose sending would not involve the paying of any subsistence allowance at all. And there is where the voluntary system on economic grounds, if there were no others, breaks down. It is tremendously expensive, as well as grossly unfair. I do not intend to stress this point, which is or should be obvious. The point I make is that the West, having furnished more than its quota of men under the voluntary system, sees the unfairness of it in its own case, and is absolutely and flat-footedly behind compulsory service, to be applied and enforced, if necessary, equally in all parts of Canada. There is no doubt about that. The West is not playing favourites, nor will it stand for favouritism, whether in province or individual.

FOLLOWING the unfortunate Canadian tendency to avoid calling things by their first names I find I have not specifically named Quebec. I apologize. I mean Quebec. Quebec and the West are at opposite ends of the log. Heretofore the West has carried its share of the big end, and Quebec has let the little end mighty close to the ground, thus making it harder for all concerned.

Now this log of service has to be carried and skidded up into place, just as much in the interest of Quebec as of British Columbia. If Quebec doesn't see it that way we can't help it. The whole structure is being delayed. But that log has to go up. Hence excuses won't go; grievances don't go as excuses. The West, which has troubles of its own, doesn't care a hoot about Quebec's grievances, real or fancied. It wants to regard Quebec as a man and a brother, but a big, husky, elder brother ought to hold up his end, or at least the West thinks so; and if he doesn't do it he is apt to hear some plain, brotherly language from t'other brother.

The main thing is that Quebec did not come through under the voluntary system, and the West does not in the least care why. Everybody has to come through nowadays, willingly or otherwise, to the extent of his ability; and there can be no evasions, no exemptions, no refusing to play the game which is national life or national death, no hair-splitting about the constitution or the rights of anybody. This war is interfering with everybody's rights, including the right to live. Any man who can't see that needs a course in a brain college. All these things are so evident that time arguing them is wasted. Those who argue contra are wilfully blind, or different in mental equipment from everybody else in the white man's world. There is no time left to run a series of academic debates. That's how the West look at it.

As for the various street-corner and other Quebec orators who denounce conscription and preach resistance thereto, the West does not take them seriously, and if she did it would make no difference to her. In common language she regards them as a lot of windy four-flushers who are trying to run a sandy. As for the danger alleged in some quarters of disrupting confederation, the West is not perturbed. Confederation will take some breaking if the West has anything to say about it, and she thinks she will have. Generally the West half believes and wholly hopes that the froth has come to the top and is making all the noise—if froth ever makes noise—and that the stuff beneath is good and sound; the general experience of the West being that the man who talks most about shooting up the town

may not be such a real wolf after all and will likely simmer down if he finds himself up against public sentiment concretely expressed. The West is prepared to express her sentiments any old way at all.

When it heard of proposals for a coalition government on a fifty-fifty basis the West was pleased. This was no reflection on the Borden government. There is no doubt that government has made mistakes; there is no doubt it might be strengthened. But also there is no doubt in the mind of the average citizen that it has handled a big, new, hard job just about as well as it would have been handled by any other set of men drawn from any one political camp. But nobody can deny that the effort of a union of two parties for one purpose should—if it is an honest union with an eye single to that purpose—effect that purpose better and more speedily than the single effort of one of the parties. Given the bona fides of the parties that proposition is incontrovertible. And therefore the West was pleased.

"This," said the West in effect, "is absolutely O. K. We get a coalition, which means that the team will be right into their collars and up on the bit. There will be no more party politics till after the war, when we need a little light excitement. And, of course, with a coalition there won't be any election, thank the Lord, or if there is, it will be a walk-

WHEN Chisholm wrote this the Winnipeg Convention was still unborn. What happened there makes no difference to the practical philosophy of the article. If B.C., speaking for the West, is out to spend its last dollar—whatever that is—on the war, the Winnipeg Convention expressed in the Neely Resolution has the same idea. Out at Windermere the Convention may have looked like what politicians call a frame-up. But it was, anyhow, one way of expressing the West by playing straight politics through and through. And no matter whether Canada's balance of interest in the war is put over by one group of thinkers or another, our part in the business will never be done as becometh a man-people unless we go at it in the spirit of Let's Go After Bear.

over. Go right to it, boys, we're behind you."

Then, to the unspeakable disgust and disappointment of the West, rain fell and the picnic was called off.

THE coalition proposals struck the average man as being a fair-and-square deal. He did not interpret the offer as a sign of weakness, but as an honest attempt to unite both political parties for one purpose, and of that purpose he thoroughly approved. When Sir Wilfrid Laurier took counsel with his friends and refused the offer the average man was surprised and disappointed. Sir Wilfrid's stated reason for such refusal—that the offer should have been made before conscription was decided on, so that he might have had a hand in the framing of whatever policy he was to support—the average man did not find very satisfying. In fact the average man, who has had more experience in cutting ice than in splitting hairs, put it this way: "Laurier refused to support conscription." The average westerner, Grit as well as Tory, does not care why he refused. Further, in the opinion of the average westerner, he who is not for conscription is against it.

In that opinion lies the political importance of Sir Wilfrid's course. Failing a clearly-cut declaration of personal views on the part of Sir Wilfrid which apparently does not exist, he is judged by the West by the declarations of the majority of his thick-and-thin supporters, which are definitely and strongly opposed to conscription. And so the West would like to know what would have happened to conscription if the policy of it had come before a cabinet of which Sir Wilfrid and his nominees composed one half? That question will be asked many times, in

many public places, before long, and an answer cannot be evaded.

For on this question there are no lines of Torres Vedras in the West. No temporizing, no half-way measure, no constitutional herrings drawn across the trail will do. The question will be put up cold and squarely to every political leader, to every party candidate. He must answer it plainly, without quirks, quibbles, or mental reservations. It is the main issue, which dwarfs all others. It is a shibboleth, and he who answers wrongly in the West will be put to the political sword.

THIS writing is in advance of political party conventions. But it is not in advance of formed and crystalized public opinion, no matter what party conventions may do. If they do not interpret the signs correctly, so much the worse for party conventions.

It is a thousand pities that Sir Wilfrid Laurier could not hear the voice of Canada calling him to place his ripe experience, his great influence, his great talents at the service of his country. No man feel this more than those western men who have followed where he led, all their political lives. But he heard merely the voice of a political opponent offering half a loaf. And the West is sincere in its regret.

When shall we get it through our heads that there are bigger things nowadays than political loaves and fishes? When and with what bitterness shall the knowledge be forced on us that we have to meet conditions of a new-upside-down world, that the old, fine-spun theories—constitutional, economic and what not—must give way before the country's pressing need for the best that is in each citizen, old or young, rich or poor, famous or unknown? Dignity, self-love, preferences, animosities—all must go, and the greatest men and the greatest Canadians are they that conquer these things in themselves; for these are greater than the taking of any political fortress.

I have said that I do not desire to draw inferences, nor to touch unduly on party politics, save as they affect a large number of Canadians who would be infinitely thankful if they were thrown into the discard, temporarily at any rate. But I say as a Canadian, that nothing in the world but party politics prevented a coalition of parties sufficient for all practical purposes; that a coalition was earnestly hoped for and would have had behind it so long as it worked honestly party and non-party men almost without

exception in the West, which even yet hopes for some measure of union; and that the disappointment was deep.

Naturally the failure of coalition proposals practically decided the fate of an extension of the parliamentary term. But strong opposition thereto settled the matter, and cinched on the back of this long-suffering country a pack containing the worry and uncertainty and unrest and waste time and money of an entirely unnecessary election, of which the prospect is already a creeping paralysis on the arm of Canadian effort.

When I say it is unnecessary I am voicing the opinions of Conservatives, Liberals and non-party men. There is every constitutional argument for an election; but there is not one common-sense argument. It is quite true that the present parliament was elected when nobody thought of war; that it was elected for five years and no longer; that a number of constituencies are not represented; that the West is entitled to more members. All true—and all claptrap and political bunk. The cold fact is that in the West at least neither party nor non-party men want an election. Nobody wants one. Everybody considers one a nuisance little short of a crime.

For how in the name of all that is sensible are we to get anywhere with a mere party election which, whichever party wins, will leave us much as we are? It takes a case-hardened partisan to maintain anything else. The best that can be said for it is that it may close the mouths of those ultra-constitutionalists who have suddenly discovered that the present parliament has no "mandate"—which they conveniently overlooked a year ago. As for

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