

SHALL WE CALL UP THE SLACKERS?

Has the Time Arrived When Canada, Like England, Shall Take Stock of Her Manhood?

By JOHN A. COOPER

CANADA is face to face with the fact that recruiting on the voluntary plan had reached its limit. There is no surprise in that. It was inevitable from the beginning.

In Toronto, for example, there are two families each having four sons, each fairly well-to-do, and each having only British blood in its veins. In the one family, the four sons have enlisted. Two reached the front, and already one has given his life "For King and Country." The other family have not contributed a single son. All four are "slackers" so far as the public can judge.

In another city, there is a well-known family with two sons, neither of whom has offered for service. Already the ladies of that city are passing these boys with a stony glare. Yet, as in nearly all these cases, the fault lies with the parents, not with the boys. Under a proper system of enlisting, such as has been adopted in England, the parents would be forced to let their sons go.

In this country, the parents have often held back their boys. The writer was in the Toronto Armouries one day when a young recruit came in and asked for his discharge—the only son of a woman who had hysterically refused to eat or drink or sleep until he got his discharge. The recruiting officer sent him back to his hysterical mother a released hero.

Over in Great Britain, they have fought a great battle over conscription. There will be no conscription, but the same results will be obtained in another way. This is how they did it:

1. They made a register of all the men.
2. They picked out the names of all unmarried men between 18 and 45, and canvassed them.
3. They offered bonuses to all who volunteered before a certain date.

Fine scheme, that. It was conscription without the sting. It was military method, softened down and enforced by civilian methods. It was reason and common sense as against militaristic conscription.

Canada has now come to the position that Great Britain reached a few months ago. When they had about two million recruits for Kitchener's Army, the recruiting stopped. All the enthusiasts were in khaki and the others would not come forward. Similarly Canada has enlisted over 200,000 men and the recruiting will come to a full stop when the 250,000, asked for by the Government, is reached.

When recruiting passes beyond that stage, new methods must be adopted to get men. But will these methods get the men whom Canada can best spare? Or will they get the men who are most valuable at home?

STRANGELY enough, the Militia Act of Canada provides for all these difficulties. It says that the unmarried men from 18 to 30 shall be called first. Then the unmarried men from 30 to 45. After that come the married men without children from 18 to 45, and so on.*

Why is this law not enforced?

For the simple reason that Canada has no record of the unmarried men and their ages. There has never been a register of our human resources—except for political purposes. We know how many cows there are under two years of age, and how many over. We keep track of the number of sheep and swine. But our human assets, the vital feature of the nation, have never been classified.

Do you think it is time for Canada to take stock? Or do you think it would be better to blunder along in the same old way? Shall we fear the snarl of the critic who will cry out against "compulsion," against "conscription," and against "militarism"? Shall we hesitate to organize the blood of the Dominion for fear some little group of hyphenated citizens will make political capital out of it?

In short, shall we enforce our military laws and call up the slacker? Or shall we go on, leaving it to the patriotic citizens to supply the men for the army, the men for the service of King and country?

*Militia Act, Chapter 41, Revised Statutes of Canada. Section 69—"The Governor-in-Council may place the militia or any part thereof on active service anywhere in Canada, and also beyond Canada, for the defence thereof, at any time when it appears advisable so to do by reason of emergency."

Section 15 divides the male population into four classes: "Class 1, shall comprise those of 18 years and upwards but under 30, unmarried or widowers without children. Class 2, all of those of the age of 30 and upwards but under 45, unmarried or widowers without children. Class 3, all those of the age of 18 and upwards but under 45, married or widowers with children. Class 4, all those of 45 and upwards but under 60. The said several classes shall be called upon to serve in the order in which they are referred to in this section."

Section 25 of the Act enacts that "the Governor-in-Council shall from time to time make all regulations necessary for the enrolment of persons liable to military service, and of cadets, and for all procedure in connection therewith, and for determining, subject to the provisions of this Act, the order in which the persons in the classes fixed by this Act shall serve."

Shall we follow Britain's example, and Australia's example, and New Zealand's example? Or shall we do, as we did in the navy matter, allow politics to keep us in the dirty ditch of inaction and indecision?

SHOULD the authorities decide that it is politically unwise to enforce the Militia Act, then Canada should stop recruiting when the 250,000 limit is reached. To go on recruiting on the voluntary principle after that would be a crime against the State.

When the war broke out, thousands of British mechanics and experienced coal-miners rushed to the colours, and were sent to France to fight the brutal Huns. But anon it dawned on the people in England who think, that this was wrong. These mechanics and miners were more valuable as soldiers in the factory and the coal-mine, than as soldiers in France. And they brought them back home and put them back to work where they could do most to bring about victory.

To-day Canada is drawing her men away from industries which are vital to the Empire. Why should we not let Russia supply the men, while our soldiers work in Canadian munition factories making the goods, the lack of which keeps five million Russians idle on the parade grounds?

If the Allies were united, working under one brain as the Teutons were, I don't believe that more than one hundred thousand soldiers would leave Canada to fight. Canada has a splendid situation for the production of wheat, oats, flour, leather goods, and other munitions of war. These can be shipped west to Russia or east to the European ports of the Allies. Most of the Canadians who are now enlisting for the fighting line could do three times as much for the final triumph of the Allies if they were to stay at home and make rifles and rifle bullets for the Russians. These Canadians are not soldiers and cannot be made into soldiers within two years. They are brave, of course, and will hold any position in which

they are placed. But they would not be soldiers, in the full sense of that term.

PERSONALLY, I am convinced that to carry our present system of recruiting farther is absolutely criminal. To-day we are taking old men, narrow-chested men, and fathers of families, and putting them in khaki, while two hundred thousand young men, unmarried, vigorous, healthy, and strong are staying at home at work which can be done by women.

Britain did the same for a few months. Then they took stock and made a list of all their young men who would make good fighters and who could be spared. With this list in hand, Lord Derby was put in charge and recruiting over there is now on common-sense lines.

Unless Canada intends to commit one of the most colossal blunders in her history, there should be an enforcement of the primary principles of the Militia Act. There should be a registration at once. It could be taken in a month by the military authorities, and within two months, the commander of every regimental district could be furnished with a list of the young men in his district who were eligible for enlistment.

This would not be compulsion. It would be the common-sense principle inaugurated by the British Government and worked out in its final details by the national recruiting committee under Lord Derby.

Canada's agricultural future, Canada's industrial future, Canada's commercial future, and Canada's social future depends upon our action in this matter. Canada owes it to herself and to the Empire to keep this country in the highest state of efficiency so long as this war lasts. The mere sending of a half million raw recruits across the ocean is not a proof of our patriotism. It may make a great splash, and it may look like loyalty, but is it common-sense? Will it in the long run be our best contribution to the successful ending of this tremendous fight against the military domination and the insolent ambitions of the Prussians?



THE GRAND ILLUSION

By AN OBSERVER

A BIRD-MAN in one of the Aviation School biplanes flying over Toronto last Saturday morning saw thousands of children swarming into a park; thousands upon thousands from all the street car lines, mobbing and multiplying among the bare, blown trees on the grass still green—thicker and more of a cram-jam around one spot that the air-man could just barely make out.

"Give it up," said he. "It's two months past children's day at the Ex. and more. 'Pon my soul! I never thought that town had so many children. What do the little dears want?"

His side-partner pointed at the park.

"Yonder it goes—see the procession?"

"Christmas! Looks like an overgrown Palm Sunday in Rome or something. Now what do you say if we duck down and have a squint?"

But bless your life! not one of the thousands of children in that long, jubilant, screaming procession so much as noticed the airship. That morning on the route from the park downtown, marching like the children that centuries ago went on the crusades, they would have ignored even a Zeppelin. War and soldiers they had forgotten. They had their eyes fixed on a strange, white-whiskered, red-coated figure away ahead yonder in a swaggering chariot of snow and ice in the part of the procession usually occupied by Gen. Hughes. That was the old world-character, born goodness knows when and where, who had swung down out of the north steering clear of the war zone, and here he was without even a flurry of snow, in the city for, perhaps many days, probably till Christmas, fixing up more benevolences for folks at home than folks at home had been able to do for soldiers abroad this long while—Old Santa Claus!

The old saint of unlimited benevolences had arrived. The newspapers said he would. They hit it right. He was sharp on time, too—marvellous how those editors knew! But, of course, the old saint had sent each of them a wireless, via the station top of the Eaton store no doubt, to have them announce

it so that no boy or girl under fifteen or baby just beginning to walk should miss being at the reception.

And this old General Santa Claus had stolen a march on thousands of people again; same as he did last year and year before—people never learn by experience somehow. For by 10.30 the old fellow was inside of Massey Hall, where he had fixed up a stage and a show; such a show! Paderewski was to come on Monday; but, however even the greatest pianist in the world would manage to play on that stage by Monday nobody but old Santa seemed to know. All that scenery and curtains and lights and a hundred strange animals and things would have to come down and out—somewhere. Well, old Santa had promised to clear the stage. He could do it.

In the meantime the hall was cram-jam full by 10.20. Before noon the hall would be empty and by ten minutes to one full again; by 2 o'clock empty once more for about five minutes—nearly four thousand people shuffling out all the back doors and then in a few minutes jam-cram full again, with the same show; and at 3.30 or about that empty once more, before 4 o'clock full up again—and before 7 o'clock that night every item of old Santa Claus' show would be out of that hall, because there was to be a concert that very night.

Well, old Santa had promised to clear the stage and he could do it. He had promised to fill the hall four times that day with 15,000 people to see him have a good time with the children who had been picked out to receive him; and he was doing it—all day long, in and out the thousands and thousands of people with never a mother hurt, or a baby jammed, or a little girl with her toes tramped on. That was remarkable. Any boy could notice that. 15,000 people are a lot to handle without a whole line-up of police.

And all those 15,000 people saw a grand illusion. They were most of them children when they arrived; the rest—no matter how old they were—became children just as soon as the funny curtain went

(Concluded on page 18.)