

Watch for
Red Week
Plans
Next Issue

THE CANADIAN FORWARD

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SOCIAL - DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Are You
Boosting
Your Own
Paper?

New Series, Vol. 1, No. 9

TORONTO, CANADA

March 10, 1917

R. A. RIGG, SOCIALIST,

(Labor Representative for Winnipeg)

Defends Anti - Registration

And Tears Aside the Veneer of "Lying Cabinet Ministers," Who Attempt to Introduce Conscription Under a Feigned Friendship for the Unemployed.

Now, sir, I come to a duty which I do not find to be pleasant. It has been my lot frequently to find that duty is not pleasant, but I endeavor never to evade duty because it is unpleasant. In the remarks that I am going to make with regard to registration and the subject of the war I make them because the necessity of the case demands that a man in this House holding unpopular views shall declare them or otherwise he must by implication prove himself a coward.

It has been charged against the honorable member for Centre Winnipeg, Seat B, that he was responsible for the discussion of this question on the floor of this House. I want to refute that charge, because every member of the House will remember that in the speech of the honorable member for Brandon remarks were made in that speech which had such a direct application that the honorable member for Centre Winnipeg, Seat B, could not avoid the necessity of speaking the thoughts that were in his mind.

A CONSCIENTIOUS VOTE AND PROVERBIAL "POLITICAL PIE."

I approach this subject without any pleasure, because I have no desire to take any action which could in any way be interpreted as assisting the German allies. My only brother is fighting with the British army in France. The husband of my only sister is fighting with the British army in Egypt, if they are still alive. I have hundreds of friends, many of them my most intimate friends, who hold opinions different to mine, who have shouldered their responsibility and taken up arms under the British flag. I appreciate what the horror of this war has meant in the tearing of the heartstrings of the people, the sorrow that it has brought into the homes of the people; I appreciate all that. But I want also to say that if I were to keep my seat in this House and not say something in connection with the subject which has been prominently discussed that I would be obliged to go away and feel that I was hiding my colors, and I am not accustomed to doing that.

First of all, in regard to the subject of registration. It was my duty, as an executive member of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, to be called down to Ottawa to attend a conference with the Premier of Canada and the Director-General regarding this subject of registration on the 23rd of December. We had a long session with the Director-General and the Premier, and as a consequence of these interviews

we received certain assurances from these gentlemen. We received the assurance from the Premier that the registration scheme was of a voluntary character, that it had no association with conscription; rather the idea was to make an appeal for voluntary national service which would render unnecessary any resort to compulsion. We were informed by the Director-General that the manner in which the cards were signed was entirely voluntary so long as they were honestly and conscientiously filled in; that if a man wished to say "no" he was at perfect liberty to do so and that would be the end of the whole thing. As a consequence, we sent throughout the length and breadth of Canada to the organized forces of this country a recommendation advising our members to sign their cards according to their conscientious conviction.

Before I went to Ottawa I was an anti-registrationist. I came home from Ottawa anti-registrationist. I came back to Winnipeg prepared to advise our men in the signing of their cards to sign them "No" for reasons that will appear plain in the course of my subsequent remarks. But the day following New Year's Day I found that the assurance which had been given to us by the Dominion Government had, so far as the evidence appeared in what I considered to be good places to look for such evidence, that the whole foundation upon which those assurances had been built had been ruthlessly torn away.

After having been assured by the Premier that this scheme was entirely voluntary, that it had no association of any kind with compulsion and conscription, I took up, among the other papers, the Telegram for Tuesday, January 2nd. It contained reports of speeches made to a number of returned soldiers in Ottawa by the Premier and the Hon. Robert Rogers. With regard to the speech of the Premier, the report deals with it in generalized terms, only indicating that the Premier intimated that more drastic measures would be employed in mobilizing the man power of this country. But under quotation marks the following report is given concerning the speech of the Hon. Robert Rogers:

ROBERT THE DIDDLE

"We are going to register the whole man power of the Dominion, and all those of military age will have to take their share of the great work. It is the only way we can reach the slackers of our country."

That is a sentiment which I am sure, from the speeches delivered in this

House, will meet with a very hearty response from the majority of the members, because conscription has been plainly, without any hesitancy, advocated by almost every honorable member that has yet spoken.

But this was made by a member of the Dominion Cabinet who was present at a meeting of the Cabinet at which the assurance that was given by the Premier to the Dominion Trades Congress executive had been considered and approved. And while on the 27th day of December of last year we were assured on full government authority that registration had no association with conscription, this report of the speech of the Hon. Robert Rogers is here contained in a copy of the Telegram issued on January 2nd. I deduce from that language that the right honorable gentleman meant to imply very definitely to those returned soldiers that registration was a preliminary to conscription.

What did the Telegram deduce from it? And I am quoting, I think, very favorable evidence when I am quoting the Telegram, in view of the fact that it is the organ of the Hon. Robert Rogers—there is the deduction of the Telegram in big red type—"Predict Compulsory Service for All Canadian Shirkers." A sub-heading goes on to read—"Voluntary Recruiting Is Near an End." And another one—"Premier Borden and the Hon. Mr. Rogers Tell Returned Soldiers That Pressure Will Probably Be Brought to Bear."

Now I want to ask the gentlemen of this House, particularly on the Government side, that supposing the promises which were made by the Liberal party prior to election had been broken, what would the people of this province have had the right to say concerning this Liberal Government? And when within five days after a solemn pledge had been given to the representatives of organized labor throughout this country, that pledge is shattered by the statement of a minister of the crown, my attitude was, as it will always be on such occasions, that men of that type are not worthy of the trust which the people of the country have reposed in them by electing them to power.

I want to say further that, as showing the subtle influences which have been weaving themselves around this question, and as evidence of the absolute insincerity, if I may use that term, which characterizes the attitude of certain affairs in this country, the Telegram, some three days later to the date of this issue, in an editorial stated that the registration scheme was purely voluntary and had been undertaken by the Government for the purpose of providing work for the unemployed.

FIVE YEARS OF WAR YET?

United States Navy League Man Thinks So—Foe Must Be Beaten.

Washington, Sept. 20.—"The war in Europe will last five years yet," Col. Robert M. Thompson, president of the Navy League, declared to-day.

"One of the most reliable experts of the Navy League has spent a year in Europe since the war began. He has devoted a lifetime to the study of military problems. His judgment of military organization should be the best. He believes the war will end about 1921.

"This conclusion is reached," Col. Thompson said, from an estimate of the situation in Europe. After two years of fighting there is almost no advantage to one side or the other. The determination and confidence of neither is materially shaken.

"History tends to prove that wars are decided quickly by a demonstration of superior strength on the part of one contestant, or that they must be fought through many years until a participant is entirely exhausted.

"In the present war the ability of neither antagonist to push home a quick victory is but just now demonstrated. It may, therefore, be taken that the struggle toward exhaustion is but just begun.

"The information in the possession of the league," continued Col. Thompson, would lead to the conclusion that the defeat of Germany is inevitable. It will, however, require a long time to establish a dominance over her and to drive her back inside her own borders. It will take much fighting to expel the Germans from France and Belgium.

"This accomplishment should take some two years. When it is made a reality the actual struggle for mastery will have begun. Germany within her own borders, with her lines thus greatly shortened, with the responsibility for directing and provisioning her less efficient allies gone, will be formidable.

A NATION'S PERIL THE BANKER'S OPPORTUNITY

Fine feathers, they say, make fine birds; but fine phrases about "sacrifice" cannot cover up the shameful treachery to the people of this country, involved in the Treasury offer of increased interest to lenders of previous war loans.

They tell us to think of the heroes in the trenches, "the blood of heroes," they call for sacrifice and thrift, they issue placards about a Victory Loan, and under cover of these phrases they deliberately increase our tribute to the money lenders.

A Victory Loan? Yes, but for whom? The first War Loan, in 1914, was at three and a half per cent. interest to the money lenders.

The second War Loan was at four and a half per cent., and the holders of the first loan at three and a half per cent. were allowed to transfer over into the new loan at the increased interest.

About four hundred millions subscribed to the second War Loan were not "new moneys," but were old loans

(Continued on Page Five)