

# Conscription

"There is to be no conscription in Canada"

Sir Willfrid LAURIER (January 17, 1916)

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"I made it clear to the people of Canada that we did not propose any conscription. I repeat that announcement to-day with emphasis"

Sir Robert BORDEN (January 17, 1916)

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EDITED BY LE DEVOIR

43 St. Vincent Street  
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1917



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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## I — ATTITUDE OF THE NATIONALISTS

	PAGE
THE "SILENCE" OF LE DEVOIR.....	7
WHO SPOKE THE TRUTH?.....	7
LOYAL COOPERATION.....	8
ORGANIZED OPPOSITION — PETITIONS.....	9
APPEAL TO REASON.....	10

## II — CANADA'S MILITARY EFFORT

CANADA HAS DONE ENOUGH.....	12
MORE THAN ENGLAND AND FRANCE.....	13
MORE THAN THE UNITED STATES.....	13

## III — THE ECONOMIC EFFORT

BANKRUPTCY — TREASON.....	15
THE WAR FOR GOLD; ITS CONSEQUENCES.....	15
LIMIT TO THE CAPACITY FOR PAYING.....	16
THE LABOR CRISIS — DANGER OF FAMINE.....	17
SEND THE SLACKERS TO THE LAND.....	18
CONSCRIPTION OF WEALTH AND INDUSTRY.....	19
CONSCRIPTION AND IMMIGRATION.....	19

## IV — THE WAR AND THE RACE PROBLEM IN CANADA

INEVITABLE DIFFERENCES.....	21
ADVANTAGES OF RACIAL PARTNERSHIP.....	21
FRENCH CANADIANS HAVE ONLY ONE COUNTRY.....	22
RECENT EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH CANADA.....	23
NECESSITY OF A FRANK EXPLANATION.....	24
FRENCH CANADIANS AND CONSCRIPTION.....	25
BRITISH "SLACKERS".....	26
CANADA DELIVERED TO THE FOREIGNER.....	27
MENNONITES, DOUKHOBORS, QUAKERS.....	27
ENGLISH-SPEAKING CANADIANS AND CONSCRIPTION.....	28
APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE.....	29

V — WHY IMPOSE CONSCRIPTION ?

SIR ROBERT BORDEN'S "EMPHATIC ANNOUNCEMENT.".....	30
THE DORCHESTER ELECTION — MINISTERIAL PLEDGES.....	31
THE PRIME MINISTER'S SOMERSAULT; HIS MOTIVES.....	32
SUBMARINE WARFARE.....	33
THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION.....	34
AMERICAN INTERVENTION.....	34
NECESSITY OF PRESERVING THE MAN-POWER OF CANADA.....	35
THE WAR CONFERENCE IN LONDON.....	36

VI — COALITION AND EXTENSION OF PARLIAMENT

MILITARISM AND AUTOCRACY.....	37
PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY.....	38
ENGLAND'S FALSE EXAMPLE.....	39
TRUE EXAMPLE OF AUSTRALIA AND SOUTH AFRICA.....	40
DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT IMPERATIVE.....	40
NECESSITY OF A REFERENDUM.....	41
INCITEMENT TO TROUBLE.....	42
CONCLUSION.....	43

APPENDIX

I VIEWS OF THE LEADERS.....	44
II RESOLUTION OF PROTEST — PETITIONS.....	45

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30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36

37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43

*This pamphlet is a faithful translation of a series of articles published in Le Devoir, from May 28 to June 6, and reproduced in pamphlet form, in French, on June 9, 1917.*

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*Some parts are now out of date owing to subsequent developments at Ottawa. It has been thought preferable, however, to adhere to a strict translation of the original; first, because much remains of the argument against conscription and for a referendum; but principally with a view to enabling English readers to know the real ground upon which the opposition to conscription has been founded and maintained in Quebec by the exponents of true nationalism.*

*English readers are merely requested to forget for a moment the absurd stuff usually presented to them as "Nationalist talk," and to judge impartially, with an unbiassed mind, the genuine article.*

*Montreal, July 19, 1917.*



## ATTITUDE OF THE NATIONALISTS

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### The "silence" of LE DEVOIR

Some people, it seems, are wondering at the "silence" that *Le Devoir* and its director have so far maintained in regard to the proposed conscription measure announced by the Prime-Minister.

The explanation is easy: it has already presented itself naturally to the minds of our regular readers.

It is not our custom to throw ourselves headforemost, at random, into every popular agitation. Conscious of our responsibility, more desirous of enlightening public opinion than of reaping the rewards of a cheap popularity, we do not believe that we have the right to speak and to act without reflection, without measuring the consequences of our acts and words. When the people, asleep, did not perceive the danger, we never ceased to raise the cry of alarm. To-day, when the peril has taken shape, the people awakening from their long lethargy are disturbed and maddened. They want to break in a day the chain which they allowed their accepted masters to forge during eighteen years. We believe that our duty is to remain calm and to appeal to reason, to cool and conscious patriotism: these are the only true, efficacious and lasting forces.

To have spoken calm reason in recent days would have been labor lost. Now that the people, the young especially, have given rein to their first indignation, let us hope that the traditional good sense of the race will assert itself. The time has come to bring before the tribunal of public opinion, aroused (at last!) and made wiser, the cause of legitimate popular liberties and of the supreme interests of the nation. This is infinitely better, in all respects, than to foment trouble and establish Jacobin clubs to demand the heads of the conscriptionists.

### Who spoke the truth?

Our "silence" has been inspired by another motive, which I deem it a duty to communicate to the public because it brings us to the very basis of the argument. In presence of a fact, sudden and extraordinary in the eyes of those who slumbered for eighteen years, but a fact the fatal issue of which we never ceased to predict, we did not deem it our duty to open the debate. This duty, we thought, belonged to those who had solemnly sworn to the gods that never would conscription be established in Canada.

For nearly three years of war, for more than seven years since *Le Devoir* was born to speak its mind, for eighteen years since I began the struggle against British Imperialism,— a foolish struggle, if you will, certainly without delusion, but also without capitulation — we never ceased saying: a blood tax is the logical, inevitable outcome of the principles laid down and actions pursued by the two parties which have in turn governed the country. The germ of conscription was contained in the “voluntary” expedition to South Africa; the régime of Imperial Conferences hatched it; the Navy Act of 1910 contributed to its growth; the emergency contribution proposed in 1913 strengthened it; the participation of Canada in the present war, decided in the name of the imperial solidarity of all British Countries, brought it to its deadly climax.

At each stage we raised the cry of distress and warning; but, every time, there came to us nothing but the dull echo of popular indifference, with, here and there, the insults of those who, perhaps in good faith, kept on misleading the people. “*Strife mongers!*” — “*Mad fools!*” — “*Demagogues!*” — such were the epithets hurled at us from all quarters. Who spoke the truth?

To our “silence” of eight days we oppose our words of eighteen long years. For our readers or hearers, and for ourselves, the announcement of conscription was certainly not a sudden and unforeseen event. When the Prime Minister’s announcement\* roughly tore aside the veil of illusions, what a unique occasion for us to raise at the same time the song of triumph and a new war cry! “Demagogues,” if we were such, we could on the morrow have aroused against both parties a deadly fight the results of which were easy to foresee. We did not do it, for several reasons which we are prepared to give out, in all candor, not only to those who have long honored us with their confidence and their sympathetic friendship, but also to all men of stout heart and good sense, to whatever school or party they may belong.

### Loyal co-operation

In the pursuance of our arduous and incessant struggle against militarism and imperialism, we may have fallen into many errors and, unintentionally, wounded just susceptibilities; but this struggle we pursued in all sincerity, without personal hatred, without interested motives, with no other desire, in fact, than that of preserving our country from those very evils now falling upon it. We would have preferred a hundred times to be branded forever as lunatics than to witness the realization of our most grievous and constant apprehension. To raise the song of triumph because events brought us ample justification would have been, in our estimation, a supreme ignominy. We have not even dreamed of doing so. We thought it more dignified to let the people themselves open their eyes. Neither did we desire, by lavishing vain praise on ourselves, to further irritate old sores and render impossible an agreement between men of good will, from all groups and schools —

\*In the House of Commons, May 18, 1917.



an agreement so necessary to parry the danger of the moment. The hour is not one for recriminations or the settlement of acrimonious accounts, but rather for an union of generous hearts, true minds, firm wills and lucid reasons.

If I have reopened a page of the past, it is not therefore with the desire of humbling those who saw less clearly than we did; on other points they might doubtless retaliate. Neither is it in order to give a legitimate satisfaction to those who have so faithfully followed us through all the vicissitudes of a public course already long and much traversed. It is with the sole hope that this recalling of a foresight, the principal merit of which has been a constant frankness, may give some weight to the modest advices which we may now offer to avert the all-menacing peril.

To all, friends or opponents of yesterday and perhaps of to-morrow, I wish to say this simple word: without in any way renouncing our respective and legitimate convictions, without binding ourselves to any future engagement, let us lend each other a loyal hand to save the country; it is more in peril than is thought, and it is not on the battle-fields of Europe that its fate is in the balance.

Wherever the voice and action of men of heart, of those who place country above party, can be reached, let us suppress the demagogues, the *real* demagogues, the creators of trouble, the kindlers of blind passions. To their sterile clamor, let us oppose concerted, fruitful, lively and disciplined action.

### Organized opposition — Petitions

The *Ligue Patriotique des Intérêts Canadiens* has initiated a movement of petitioning *en masse* against conscription. A solid organization will make it possible to collect within a few days all the signatures of those who are opposed to the adoption of this measure. I venture to ask all those who have some confidence in us to remain quietly at home and to wait until the petition forms are presented to them. This method is infinitely more efficacious than demonstrations on the streets.\*

Assuredly, I do not question the right of a free British people to express their opinions in public places and on the platform. The first meetings had the advantage of arousing public opinion; and, on the whole, they were admirable in their order and calmness. In peaceable and sparsely populated localities, such manifestations may be held without any inconvenience. But in a great, cosmopolitan city, like Montreal, such gatherings threaten at the present hour to do more harm than good. Much less expressive of public opinion than a general petitioning, they offer the most auspicious opportunities for excess of language, for provocations and disturbances.

There are amongst us and around us provocative agents, who are simply looking for the chance of placing the French-Canadians in the worst light to the eyes of all other people in Canada and the Empire:

\*The text of the petitions prepared by the League will be found in Appendix II. The resolution unanimously voted at the public meeting held by the League, at the Monument National, June 7, 1917, is also reproduced.

that of "rebels," disloyal to the Crown and hostile to the laws of the country. A servile and purchased press devotes itself unceasingly to paint us in the falsest colors. Let there be in a gathering of ten thousand peaceable people fifty or even ten who indulge in excess of language or in acts of violence, the attitude of this insignificant minority will be represented all over the land as that of the whole population.

In this disloyal and anti-national work these provocative agents and professional calumniators have, amongst our own people, two sets of accomplices: the demagogues, who arouse the crowd, and the servile newspapers which exasperate it.

Fortunately, both are very few in number. Most of the speeches so far pronounced have remained within the limits of free and legitimate protest. Several have even produced a salutary effect. Nevertheless, one single incendiary word would suffice to cause serious, perhaps irreparable mischief.

Reduce to impotence the demagogues, actual and prospective, by deserting the platforms where they may seek to exhibit themselves and their wild speeches. As to the reptile newspapers cease to buy and read them — a much more effective means than the breaking of windows.

French Canadians, do not forget that you are, at the present hour as at all the turning points of Canadian history, the defenders of public and constitutional order, the guardians of national traditions and of legitimate popular liberties. Sooner than is now thought, it will be shown that by opposing the designs of the extreme partisans of this war you are the most faithful subjects of the King whose downfall is being prepared at this moment in his own kingdom. Do not weaken your role, so noble and so essential, by puerile and dangerous explosions.

Yesterday, answering the appeal of our religious heads, we asked God for light for those who govern us and calm force for ourselves and our children. To-day and to-morrow, in the plenitude of our prerogatives as free men, under Christian discipline, let us take the necessary measures to assert our rights and to save the vital forces of the nation. To the attempt of the government, unjustifiable at this hour, oppose not verbose and sterile agitation but strong and orderly action.

### Appeal to reason

In my humble sphere of action I propose to bring against conscription, in a few articles, a series of rational and reasonable arguments, applying to the economic, the social and the national aspects of the question. I wish to bring to this expose only those arguments which can meet with the acceptance of all men of good will, Liberals and Conservatives, Nationalists or Imperialists, supporters or opponents of Canada's intervention in the European war. My sole request to *bona fide* readers is, that instead of looking merely for flaws, they will study facts and reasons on their intrinsic merits, and apply them in good faith to the object in view. Some desire before all the safety and the hegemony of the Empire, others the triumph of the Allies; in our eyes the safety and the greatness of our Canadian land constitute

the main objective. But I take it for granted that we are all in accord on one main point: *the necessity of saving the national unity of Canada and of preserving its economic fabric.* For us that is the principal, if not the unique end; for the imperialists, or, generally, the upholders of intervention, it is the surest means of attaining their object.

As to the mad fanatics who persist in wishing "*to bankrupt Canada to save the Mother Country,*" it would be useless to seek a ground of understanding with them. In the state of mind which I have resolved upon, the most practical thing to do, I venture to think, is to put them aside for the time being. At the most I will only yield to the temptation of repeating the saying of a very prominent Englishman, to whom I had submitted this formula of imperial "devotion." "You know," he replied in excellent French, with a lenient smile, "in every country and in all governments, there are men always *young*, ... and also fools." — "Agreed, Sir...."



## II

### CANADA'S MILITARY EFFORT

#### Canada has done enough

If the enlistment of troops was the sole or main consideration of the moment, the government would be, or rather, would *have been* justified in enforcing conscription. When the normal limits of voluntary enlistments, *really* voluntary, were reached, military service should have been made obligatory. On several occasions I have expressed the opinion that conscription would have been better than the pernicious system of enlistment, so wrongly called "voluntary," followed by the State and by recruiting agents of all sorts.\* That view remains unaltered. I will say more. If the government and parliament were sincere when they proclaimed to the skies their determination to devote all the resources of the country in men and money to the "saving" of the Empire, of France, of "higher civilization" and "democracy," they should, like the American Congress, have adopted from the very beginning a measure of *selective conscription*. That was the only rational method to assure the maximum effort — military and economic — of the country, the only way of raising a large army without disorganizing agriculture and the basic industries. Lacking a real grasp of the situation or the courage to face it, the government organized the army by its too well known methods, and disorganized, or allowed to be disorganized, all the rest. Every day, every week, every month, the evil was aggravated.

"But then," may object those who favor conscription, "the measure proposed by the government, late as it may be, none-the-less constitutes, by your own admission, a remedy for the evil." No, it is too late: the remedy to-day would be worse than the evil. In the purely military order, the time for conscription is past. What is urgent is not to send more soldiers, but to *send no more*.

At the Lachine meeting — which remains, I think, the model for anti-conscription manifestations — an intelligent and courteous English-speaking Canadian, favorable to conscription, Mr. Guy Morey, stated very sensibly: "If you are logical, you are against all future enlistments."

That is the exact truth. All Canadians who want logically and effectively to oppose conscription ought to have the courage to say

\*Traces of that opinion will be found in a leading editorial published in *Le Devoir*, July 26, 1915; also, in the 4th chapter of *Hier, Aujourd'hui, Demain*, printed in 1916 (price: \$0.75; by mail, \$0.85).

and to repeat everywhere: "No conscription, no enlistments: Canada has done enough."

## More than England and France

Let us compare the military effort of Canada with those nations to which we stand closer, on account of situation, common interests, sympathies and population — England, France and the United States.

We have at present in Europe, or in the training camps in Canada, 420,000 men, regular troops and auxiliary service. If the population of Canada at the outset of the war is put at 7,000,000 — and deducting the numerous foreigners who left the country in 1914, that is the maximum figure — we have thus enlisted for the European war six per cent of our population. That is the equivalent of an army of 2,400,000 men for France and of 2,700,000 men for the United Kingdom. Now, despite its enormous army on *paper* England has not yet sent to France, in the two years and ten months of the war, this number of men. It will be admitted, I presume, that England has an interest at least equal to that of Canada in preventing the German army reaching Calais.

Another question may be fairly put in respect to our principal allies: — *How many French soldiers, or even British soldiers, would they send to America, if Canada was attacked by the United States?*

If, in considering the military effort of Canada, account is taken not only of the population of the countries and of the number of their effectives, but also of the *cost* of the armies, the comparison is even more striking. Take as a basis that Canada expends for its army three times more than England per soldier and four times more than France.\* The comparative figures attributed to France must therefore be multiplied by four, and the figures for England by three. The result is that Canada's actual army costs the country what an army of 8,100,000 men would cost England and what an army of 9,600,000 men would cost France. That is more than our two "mother-countries" will put in service during the whole war, even if it lasts five years. Now, France and England are to-day, next to the United States, the two wealthiest nations of the world, while Canada is one of the poorest.

## More than the United States

The comparison with the United States is in certain respects still more striking. The geographical situation of the two countries is identical, the remoteness of danger from German aggression is the same for both. But the American nation is *fourteen* times more populous than Canada and *seventy-four* times richer. To equal the actual effort of

\*Everything being counted, the disproportion of cost would certainly be found greater than indicated here. The pay of the British private is one shilling; that of the French, about 5 cents. When accounts are settled with the British Government and the shipping companies which look after the transport of Canadian troops, the cost of the military expedition of Canada will be enormously increased.

the Dominion the United States should raise and send to Europe an army of six million men and undertake a certain expenditure of at least one hundred billions. Now, the most extravagant of American jingoes, those who are far in advance even of the bellicose Col. Roosevelt, speak of a possible army of only three million after two years of preparation. That would be exactly half of what Canada has done up to the present. Americans who represent more accurately official opinion, that which will in all probability prevail, estimate at a million the number of American soldiers who will take part in the European war. In that case the military effort of Canada will be six times greater than that of the United States, and it will last three years longer.

Calculated in dollars and cents, the disparity is still greater. The United States pays \$1.00 a day to its soldiers, Canada \$1.10. Taking as a basis an actual army of 420,000 men for Canada and a possible army of 2,000,000 men for the United States (an average between the figure generally accepted and the most extreme estimate), each Canadian — man, woman and child — pays \$24 a year for its army, while the American will pay but \$7. If the war ends next year the Canadian will have paid or must pay \$96, the American \$7; if the war lasts until 1919, Canadians will be mulcted to the extent of \$120 per head while the American will be quits for \$14. Remember that these calculations deal only with the *pay of the privates*. In taking account of everything—the salaries of the officers, separation allowances, pensions, transportation, arms, etc.,—a much greater difference would be shown.

Even supposing that Canada does not enlist one single man over and above the present number, it may safely be affirmed that the military effort of the United States, whatever degree of intensity it may attain, will cost *ten times less* to each American than the effort of Canada to each Canadian.

How then in truth can there be found a single Canadian not to say openly: "We have done our share, and more than our share."

### III

## THE ECONOMIC EFFORT

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### Bankruptcy — Treason

In the economic as in the military field it is time — more than time — to cry 'Halt.' We have done enough for the war; we have done too much.

What is imperative is not a swelling war-budget, a further outlay for destruction; it is to stop the race to bankruptcy and to utilize all the resources of the country in order to stimulate without delay agricultural production and to make possible the reconstruction of tomorrow.

"To ruin Canada to save the mother country" is not only the watchword of national treason, it is also the betrayal of our allies. If the government and parliament persist in the execution of this monstrous design they will strike a deadly blow at England and the whole British Empire.

Almost from the beginning of the war, the "dictator" of the Empire, Mr. Lloyd George — then Chancellor of the Exchequer — gave to the British people this salutary warning: the war will be won by the last piece of gold and the last sheaf of wheat.

Nearly a year ago, if I am not mistaken, the leading economist, perhaps, of the whole British Empire, Sir George Paish — the very one chosen by the Imperial government to establish the basis of financial relations between Great Britain and the United States — warned the Dominions against the danger of an excess of zeal. In the interest of England and of the Empire at large he advised them not to go beyond the measure of their forces, not to accumulate debts out of proportion to their paying capacity, not to burden their annual budget with heavy interest charges which would paralyze their activities.

### The War for Gold; its consequences

Distracted by our respective sympathies and antipathies for the different countries of Europe, we have too easily forgotten the essential character, the basic motive of this frightful war. When distance in time will permit a comprehensive judgment on the deep causes of this world-wide crisis of madness, all clear-sighted and impartial minds will agree to relegate to second place the local or accidental causes of the conflict: — the assassination of Sarajevo, the rivalry of

Teutons and Slavs, the economic competition between Britons and Germans, the old grudges between France and Germany. Then will appear before the tribunal of unblinded public opinion, the true culprit, hideous and bloody, the author of all the evil, the infamous God of Gold, the *auri sacra fames* of the Pagan world. Racial hatred, thirst for conquest, and even legitimate claims of the peoples, are only the instruments which the beasts of prey of international high finance have used to precipitate the nations one against the other. Fomented by the thirst for gold, this war is sustained principally by the power of gold; and when the weapons fall from the hands of the exhausted peoples, the struggle will be kept up in the economic field.

It is not my wish and purpose, at the present time, to attempt to assign the nations more or less guilty of the crime of cupidity. Neither is it the moment to determine the policy which Canada should adopt if the proposed scheme of economic war is realized after the armed conflict. But it is the moment to inquire what Canada should do *at once* to avert being crushed and annihilated, when the rest of the world shall emerge from the heap of ruins accumulated by the war.

### Limit to the capacity for paying

Canadians owe it to themselves, they owe it to the Empire and to their allies in the war, not to perish of inanition after the war, not to allow themselves to be bled bare and trampled under foot even by their own associates, British or foreign.

Now, every additional military effort, every increase in its war budget drives Canada to ruin and suicide. We have reached, if we have not gone beyond, the *extreme limit* of our *capacity to pay* for destruction.

By the testimony of the Finance Minister,\* Canada had expended for the war, to the 31st March last, at least \$600,000,000; the anticipated war expenditure for the current year is \$500,000,000; total, \$1,100,000,000; — *not including pensions or indemnities to the invalided, or the interest charges on the war debt.* If the wealth of the United States is estimated to be seventy-four times greater than that of Canada — a proportion established by the best informed economists — our war expenditure is equivalent to more than *eighty billions* for the American nation. The most unbridled of American jingoes, the most excited of the fanatics of democracy, never suggested and never will dream of suggesting that the American nation should throw the half or the quarter of that sum into the bottomless pit of the war.

If our rulers, our public men, our "captains of finance and industry," would only take the trouble of making a thorough survey of the situation, and then reflect for five minutes on the frightful morrow that is preparing, they would be the first to cry: "Not a man, not a dollar more!" Naturally, the actual effort must be sustained; obligations incurred must be provided for. But all additional effort

\*In his Budget speech, delivered in the House of Commons, April 24, 1917.



should have as its sole object to stop, not to promote, the movement which is driving Canada to ruin.

National bankruptcy would be fatal not only to Canada; it would shake the credit of England and of the whole British Empire; its multiple repercussions would increase heavily the embarrassments of those countries whose cause we have espoused.

This single aspect of the situation should suffice to induce imperialists and nationalists, upholders and opponents of Canada's participation in the war, to stand in common opposition against conscription and against all increase in the army, all inflation of the war budget.

But this is not the sole or even the principal argument against conscription. The disorganization of labor and the decrease in agricultural production constitute a danger still graver — or, at least, more immediate — than the financial starvation of the country.

### The labor crisis — Danger of famine

By the methods followed up to the present time to promote "voluntary" enlistments, agriculture and several of the basic industries — amongst others the mining and distribution of coal, and lumbering operations — have been depleted of the *quality* and *quantity* of hands absolutely required by these vital activities. The results are felt by *all*, every day, in the unceasing increase in the cost of food, coal and many other articles of prime necessity. It will be felt much more next winter.

To this growing evil a measure of *selective* conscription adopted at the outset of the war, and applied with intelligence, might have afforded some remedy. At the present hour, *any measure of conscription*, every increase in the army, either voluntary or obligatory, will only add to the evil.

Canada has given to the war all that it can spare of man-power without grave danger to its own existence and that of the allied countries.

In this regard, England will suffer still more than Canada by the lack of foresight of our rulers, if they persist in the perilous course into which they desire to launch the country.

*The danger of famine is more formidable, more urgent and more immediate for England than it is for Germany.* This truth, courageous and far-sighted Englishmen do not attempt to disguise.

What England has most need of is not soldiers, but bread, meat and potatoes. This is so much the case that the British government has withdrawn from the army thousands of men and placed them at the plough. The danger in fact is so pressing that Mr. Balfour and the British delegates, when in Washington, at the risk of offending the French representatives, asked that the United States should forward foodstuffs to England before sending soldiers to France — a request that was granted.\*

\*Since those lines were written, more evidence has come of the anxiety prevailing in Great Britain in that regard. On the 6th of June, "Capt. Chs. Bathurst, "Parliamentary Secretary to the Food Control Department, said it was not in the "public interest to give any information regarding food supplies, but it was of the

Even in France thousands of farmer-soldiers are being periodically recalled from the trenches and put to work in the fields or the vineyards.

## Send the slackers to the land

Here again is a feature where the reality of facts demands the attention of statesmen and should make them understand that identity of methods is only applicable where and when situations are identical.

The Canadian government cannot in a few hours recall from the front a certain proportion of our soldiers, set them to work on the land, and return them later on to the trenches. Whilst the French, German, English, Austrian, Italian or Russian soldiers can alternately *destroy* and *produce*, sustain the military effort of the nation while participating in its economic effort, the Canadian soldiers, separated from their own country by thousands of miles of ocean, are engaged solely in *destroying* and *consuming without ever producing*. They weaken at the same time the military and the economic effort of the Canadian nation, whilst affording to the Allies but an inevitably limited and fatally diminishing support.

If the government at Ottawa had a real grasp of the situation, they would at once cease the enlistment and the transport of new troops to Europe, and seek to stimulate agricultural production in Canada by all means at their command.

If we wish to supply to England what she needs most, food, we should place *less* men in the army and in the munition factories, and *more* on the land, in the forests, in the mines and the shipyards: — on the land, to sow and to harvest wheat and potatoes; in the forest, to prepare the raw material for numerous ships; in the coal mines, to supply the needs of shipbuilding and every industry connected therewith; in the shipyards, to furnish means of transportation, without which the English people will starve, however abundant may be the harvest in Canada, in the United States or elsewhere.

All this requires thousands of hands. Where will they be got?

A conscriptionist speaker or journalist recently remarked: "Go in the evening on St. Catherine Street, you will see thousands of young loafers who would be much better in the army than on the sidewalk." In the first place, it ought to be ascertained how many of these young men are really "loafers"; then, one must know the character of their employment, during their hours of work. If it is found that they are really useless, let them be sent not to the army but to the farm. That would be infinitely better for everybody — better for themselves,

"greatest importance to the success of the Allies' cause that food exportation from America should be on the highest possible scale for the remainder of the war". (Associated Press Cable.)

This very day (July 19), the *Montreal Gazette* publishes the facts and figures cabled to the *New-York Times* by its special correspondent in London: "The loss of ships by submarine totals 600,000 tons per month, or from two or three times the total of new construction. There is no possibility whatever of the construction capacity overtaking the present rate of loss in time to avoid a peace being forced on the Allies."

better for Canada, better for England and the Empire, better for France and her allies.

## Conscription of wealth and industry

Another measure of conscription far more imperatively needed than conscription for cannon food is the conscription of capital and industry. Let there be no cry of alarm. I am by no means tempted to fall into the snares of spiteful socialism or destructive communism. On the contrary it is by appealing to the fundamental principles of the Christian social order that I say: if it is just to let fall upon all classes of society the tax of blood and the heavy burden of military duties (or so-called duties), it is infinitely more equitable to distribute the charges of the war budget in proportion to the *capacity for paying*.

That millions of fathers of families, who can hardly balance their modest domestic budget, should be burdened with war taxes, while a few thousand vampires receive twenty, fifty, and as high as *nine hundred per cent*, thanks to the war and war operations, is absolutely unjust, immoral, contrary to social order and destructive of all economic equilibrium.

Upon this aspect of the situation I do not wish to insist at present. It demands a study by itself. May I be permitted, however, to tell this much to the leaders of the community: Beware! you are thinking at the moment only of the outside war, of the armies promised to England. Your motives and your sincerity I do not wish here and now to question. But let me remind you of a fundamental truth, and at the same time give you a piece of advice. The truth is that before being charged with the care of "saving" the Empire or France, "superior civilization" and "democracy," you are under the bounden obligation of saving Canada, its national unity, its internal peace. In the execution of what you believe to be your duty towards the Empire and humanity, you are preparing to increase the sufferings of the Canadian people, to make mothers weep, and to reduce to misery thousands of homes by depriving them of their natural sustenance. Take care that the people do not soon rise against you and against the vultures who are gorging themselves with millions torn from the vitals of the nation. The danger of to-morrow, threatening and formidable, all the world over, is not the triumph of "German Barbarism," it is class hatred and social war. Even here the tempest is gathering more quickly than you imagine; conscription may be the first lightning in the storm. That the clouds may only break later is still possible; but the ravages will be only the greater. This peril, believe me, is far more real than the "war of races" of which so much is said.

## Conscription and immigration

Another feature calls for the attention of all and the prudence of statesmen: the probable effect of conscription on foreign immigration.

Our views in that respect are well known to the readers of *Le Devoir*. To a large foreign immigration we have never been favorable, we will never be. But in the purely economic order, politicians of both parties are practically bound by necessity to attract millions of emigrants to Canada after the war — not only to fill the gaps in the population, but above all to save the country from bankruptcy.

If the objection is raised that this is an after-the-war problem, while the necessity for conscription is immediate, I reply without hesitation that the two questions are inseparably connected and must henceforth be examined together.

"The reasons why there can be no conscription in Canada are "obvious," said Sir Wilfrid Laurier, on the 17th of January 1916. "Apart from any other, one paramount reason, which is on top of all "the others, is that we could not adopt conscription in Canada without "giving a severe blow to our policy of immigration."\*

That was absolutely true last year; it is doubly true this year. If, following the United States, Canada adopts a conscription law, it can be safely assumed that the flow of European immigration — British as well as foreign — will be diverted from North America and carried almost entirely to South America (and to such British countries that will have had the sense of keeping free from "Prussian militarism.")

It is not to-morrow, it is *now* that Parliament must decide whether it wishes to repeople Canada after the war.

\*Speech on the Address, Debates of the House of Commons, January 17, 1916, page 19. A long extract from that speech will be found in Appendix I.

## IV

# THE WAR AND THE RACE PROBLEM IN CANADA

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### Inevitable differences

Since the beginning of the war, the inevitable divergence of views which divides in many respects the two principal ethnical groups in Canada — French-Canadians and English-speaking Canadians — has been increased and accentuated. There really exists between the two races, I will not say a chasm, but what the English call a deep *line of cleavage*. Without giving way to the hysterical exaggeration of those who see everywhere the spectre of "civil war," it would be both puerile and dangerous to shut one's eyes to the dangers which might arise from this situation.

Whence comes the evil? What remedy is there for it?

Superficial minds, gullible people — and also the true culprits, anxious to escape their responsibilities by throwing them on to others — have found this simple and convenient explanation: "Racial strife and hatred is the work of demagogues."

In the first place, the words "demagogues" and "demagogy" ought first to be defined. What politicians and journalists of both races generally mean by "demagogues" is, in the first place, their respective opponents; then, and especially, those public men who place national interests and the preservation of racial characteristics above the particular interests of any province or party. In my humble opinion, the true "demagogue" is he who, to enhance his personal popularity and his party's interests, flatters the passions of the people, of all people, in all the Provinces. The true "demagogue" is not always he who uses the most violent words.

Without carrying this argument further, which would be useless for the moment, it will suffice to cast a glance over a century and a half of history to perceive the futility of this explanation. Since the English conquest there has always been between the two races divergence of opinions, sentiments and aspirations. According to circumstances, external or internal, the line of demarcation has been more or less accentuated, disputes more or less bitter, the *bonne entente* more or less easy. But the basic causes of misunderstanding never disappeared. That a few demagogues alone could create or maintain these primary and permanent causes, no serious and thoughtful mind could admit.

### Advantages of racial partnership

I belong to a school, less numerous than is thought, who sees more advantages than drawbacks in the co-existence of two races in Canada.

With a still more restricted number I believe that the whole of Canada will benefit by this situation and will receive from the two races the maximum of their contribution to the political, intellectual and moral patrimony of the nation in the exact degree that each will remain most completely itself, with its own qualities, temperament, attributes and intellectual heritage. The Canadian nation will not attain its supreme destiny, it will not even *exist*, except under the express condition of preserving its bi-ethnic and bilingual character, and of remaining faithful to the ideal of the Fathers of Confederation, which was a free and voluntary partnership of two peoples, enjoying equal rights in all matters.\*

At all events, whatever may be one's views and preferences in that regard, the *fact* which is patent to all is the presence at the same time on Canadian territory of a compact group of nearly two million Canadian citizens of purely French extraction, and of a heterogeneous body of about five million English-speaking Canadians, of which one quarter at least is not of British stock and a good half not of the English race. Who will pretend that it is possible or reasonable to expect from French-Canadians and from English-speaking Canadians — from *all* Canadians — the same thought, the same effort, in all that does not directly affect the exclusive interests of Canada?

On many problems of local or national concern, agreement in sentiments and perfect identity of views are impossible. Such an unanimity exists nowhere, not even amongst people of one race, one language and one religion. With much greater reason French-Canadians and English-speaking Canadians cannot think and act alike when they are called upon to solve their external problems, those especially which concern their relations with Great Britain and other British nations.

### French Canadians have only one country

French-Canadians, it cannot be too often repeated, are exclusively *Canadians*. Canada is their only country, their *unique patrie*. To no other country in the world — not to France, not to Britain — they acknowledge those duties which, at all times and in all lands, have been incumbent on the citizens of each country. Foremost amongst these exclusively *national* duties is military service, which entails the tax of blood.

Separated from France for one hundred and fifty years, first by the Cession, and perhaps even more by the French Revolution, the

\*This was admirably expressed by Sir John A. MacDonald, in opposition to the contention of Mr. Dalton McCarthy that the French language has no national standing in Canada: "The statement," said Sir John, "that has been made so often "that this is a conquered country is *à propos de rien*. Whether it was conquered or "ceded, we have a constitution now under which all British subjects are in a position "of absolute equality, having equal rights of every kind, of language, of religion, "of property and of person. There is no paramount race in this country, there is "no conquered race in this country, we are all British Subjects on that account." (*Debates, House of Commons, 1890, col. 745*).

French-Canadians have preserved for the land of their origin a sincere affection. In its greatness and heroism they take pride; in its triumphs they rejoice; its trials sadden their hearts; its errors they deplore. But they do not consider themselves *obliged* to fight for France, any more than the French of Europe would believe themselves *bound* to fight for French Canada if "civil war" broke out here, or for Canada as a whole if the United States or Japan were to attack it. Their feelings in this respect are absolutely identical with those of the Belgian Walloons or the French-speaking Swiss. When French propagandists are sent here to preach us our "duties" towards France we experience the same feelings of impatience which would be displayed at Brussels or Geneva, if the French would presume to commit such a *faux-pas* in Belgium or Switzerland. If painful misunderstandings between Old and New France are to be averted, it is high time that this elementary truism should be stated.

As regards Great Britain, French-Canadians hold themselves bound — as all Canadians — by *all* the duties resulting from the Constitution (voted by the British Parliament), from the agreements made fifty years ago and over by the Imperial authorities and the Canadian government, and also from the respective position occupied in the world by the two countries — but by *nothing more*. For a century and a half their religious and civil heads, the leaders of all parties, Liberal, Conservative and National,\* English and French, Protestant and Catholic, have taught them that they have no other military duty to perform than to defend the territory of Canada when it is directly attacked. That England, being sole mistress of the Empire's foreign policy, is alone bound to bear the burdens of imperial wars, has been the oft-repeated and never contradicted assertion of all those leaders. It was the doctrine held and propounded by MacNab and Taché, by Macdonald and Cartier, by Howe and McGee, by Mackenzie and Dorion, by Campbell, Blake and Tupper, by Laurier, Mercier and Chapleau. That all those men were "disloyal," "cowardly," "traitorous" to King and Empire, we find it hard all of a sudden to believe.

### Recent evolution of English Canada

For many years this doctrine was accepted in the whole of English Canada as gospel truth, as the only policy compatible with the dignity of the Canadian Confederacy and its national interest. So long as this was the case, *no dispute ever arose between the two races as regards the nature and the extent of their common or respective obligations towards Great Britain and the Empire.*

But the constant and increasing flow of British immigration has transformed the physical, intellectual and moral characteristics of the English-Canadian population; and the Imperialistic propaganda carried on for twenty years has profoundly affected, if not destroyed, in the

\*The "National" party here referred to is the party organized under that name by Honoré Mercier, in 1885.

minds of our English-speaking fellow-citizens, what was once an exclusively *Canadian* patriotism.

Whilst French-Canadians, as a whole, have remained exclusively Canadian, English-speaking Canadians have been divided into numerous groups. By some, Canada is now merely regarded as one of the component parts of a great whole, the British Empire, their greater land, just as Yorkshire forms part of England, or Ontario of Canada. Others, less logical and less denationalized, endeavour to balance with more or less accuracy their duties towards Canada and their obligations towards the "mother country." Some are more British than Canadian, others more Canadian than British; hardly any is left among them of the true, "unhyphenated" Canadians of old. In short, the simple idea of one single native country — *l'unique patrie* — has almost disappeared in English Canada, at least in appearance. I say "in appearance," because I still believe in the revival, after the war with its inevitable reactions, of an old leaven of nationalism.

At all events, such was the situation at the outset of the war.

### Necessity of a frank explanation

The Canadian nation entered the war, not as a unit — as is so often and so falsely pretended — but, on the contrary, profoundly divided in itself and in its true sentiments towards Great Britain and her allies. With the accumulation of the burdens of war — and also with the repeated efforts made by the press and politicians of both parties to disguise the exact truth as regards the respective feelings of the two races — the division has grown deeper and deeper.

There is here no design on my part of departing from the policy of conciliation which I have outlined. Far from it. But true and fruitful conciliation cannot be effected by falsehood and equivocation. This is the most painful part of the wound, but also the most infectious. If any good is to result from loyal cooperation, the wound must be disinfected. To cover it with a plaster is to invite gangrene and to court death.

That many of the opinions expressed during the past two and a half years, even by those whom we have denounced most rigorously, were inspired by the sincere desire to prevent race discord, I would like to believe, I do believe. But in view of their complete failure, is it not reasonable to confess that a false method was employed?

Most of the leaders of French Canada have endeavored to carry their compatriots into the movement in favor of intervention, to identify them both in body and mind with the cause of England and its allies. They did not succeed; they could not succeed. The mentality of a people, its temperament and ideas, cannot be changed in a moment; its principles of national life, its habits, its prejudices, if you will, cannot be destroyed in an hour, especially when they are of a sudden confronted with a doctrine radically opposed to that which has been, for a century and a half, presented to them as the only true one.

From this initial mistake sprung a second, born of the first. After witnessing the utter failure of all appeals to British "loyalty" and



"duty" towards France "our second (or first) *mother-country*," it was attempted to repair the evil by disguising the truth to English-speaking Canadians. Tongue and mind were tortured in order to prove that French-Canadians were as favorable as Anglo-Canadians to the participation of Canada in the European war, and that they were enlisting with the same enthusiasm and in the same proportion. This second mistake was worse than the former. It was bound, sooner or later, to result in acrimonious explanations, in bitter disillusionment and extremely dangerous reactions. That is where we are now.

The greatest danger threatening our national unity is not the hatred or the mutual mistrust of the two races, it is the system of mutual deception followed for twenty years — often in good faith — by the political and social leaders of both races.

These observations are not intended to denounce or to condemn anybody. By following the opposite system — that of absolute frankness and rigorous conclusions — we, Nationalists, have perhaps deserved some of the numerous reproaches we have received. To those of our opponents whom we may have judged with too much severity I sincerely apologize; and this costs no effort either to my conscience as a Christian or to my honor as a public man or a private citizen. But in return I would ask all to recognize as I do the absolute necessity of using the most absolute frankness in dealing with our English-speaking fellow-countrymen. If a race conflict is to be averted and national unity restored, all must unite to break down that wall of duplicity which separates French-Canadians from English-speaking Canadians and behind which rises on both sides the flood of mistrust and hatred.

## French Canadians and Conscription

Some will no doubt be inclined to think that I have to a great extent departed from the subject of my study — Conscription; but these explanations were absolutely necessary to bring home to English-speaking Canadians the exact character of the general and invincible hostility aroused in French Canada by the sole mention of the word Conscription.

The immense majority of French-Canadians have long ago come to the conclusion that Canada has gone beyond the limit of a reasonable participation in the European war. But so long as enlistments continued nominally to be of a "voluntary" character, they allowed things to take their course. In my opinion, that was a mistake. The moment they considered that the measure was full and that the future of the country was being endangered, they should have raised constant public protestations. Their excuse is the extraordinary respect they have for the liberty of others. Moreover they have been so often told that they should never speak aloud, or speak the first! They have been so repeatedly assured that conscription would never be voted or even "proposed"!

The day when the Prime Minister's declaration tore aside the veil of illusion and broke the pledge of all the representatives of Quebec in the ministry — as well as the word of Sir Robert Borden himself —

the first feeling was one of amazement, the second of anger, and the third the firm determination to oppose the tyrannical measure by all legitimate means of resistance.

It is idle to disguise the truth: *two millions of French-Canadians are opposed en masse to conscription*. Such isolated exceptions as may be found do not in any way change the general fact. False declarations may be trumped up here and there about the "loyal" sentiments of "well thinking" French-Canadians. Exasperation in the masses and a stiffened opposition to conscription will be the sole results of these subterfuges.

It rests with the prudence and wisdom of the government not to push things to the point of provoking more violent reactions. Whatever may happen, extreme acts will remain isolated; there is not perhaps in the whole world, a population more orderly, by instinct and by education, than the French-Canadians. But if the *Leads of the nations* cannot read the signs of the times, incidents will occur which will deal a heavy and painful blow to national unity; and the cause of the Allies which they claim to help will thereby suffer an evil infinitely greater than one hundred thousand more soldiers could do it good.

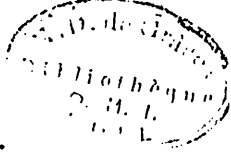
### British "slackers"

Everything in the application of compulsory service — however impartial it may appear to be — will tend to irritate French-Canadians, and generally all Canadians who are *Canadian* before all.

By the force of circumstances, conscription would be felt more, proportionally, in the ranks of French-Canadians than in any other portion of the community. The proportion of young men liable to be called in the first draft is much greater among them than among English-speaking Canadians. This disparity has been further increased, of late, by the flight abroad of a large number of young English-Canadians. It is stated that joint measures have been taken, both at Ottawa and at Washington, to put an end to this exodus. But how will the thousands of British and Canadian "slackers" who crossed the frontier before the adoption of these measures be reached?

Then, what is to be done with the thousands of young Englishmen who have come to Canada or remained here for the very purpose of evading the conscription law of the United Kingdom? They are to be seen everywhere; everywhere one can hear the Cockney accent or the guttural sounds of the Yorkshire dialect.

Is it to be imagined that when young French-Canadians are called upon to shoulder the gun and conscripted "to save the Empire and British democracy," while hundreds and thousands of Britishers peacefully remain here to earn the salary of the conscripted natives, and to eat their bread... is it likely that the "British loyalty" of our *piou-pious*, or that of their fathers, mothers, wives, children, brothers and sisters, will be greatly increased?



## Canada delivered to the foreigner

What about the hundreds of thousand unnaturalized aliens? They certainly will not be enlisted, either by persuasion or by force. A large number of them come from enemy countries; others from countries for the defense of which Canadians are to be conscripted. The heritage of those Canadians who will have died to save "higher civilization" will virtually fall into the hands of those new-comers, of those "barbarians" — imported from Europe at a premium of five dollars a piece. Is this prospect of a nature to make conscription favorably received by the sons of the first inhabitants of the country, whether French or English?

Let this be well considered: the ultimate and positive effect of conscription and of the sending of any further Canadian troops to Europe, will be to *reduce the number and influence of Canadians*, that is, of real Canadians, whether of British or French extraction, and to *increase the power of the foreign element, especially of Germans and Slavs*...

This single consideration should be sufficient to kill any conscription measure and to put an end to enlistments, and this, in the very best interests of the British Empire. Even more than the immigration problem, the necessity of preserving Canada as a *Canadian* and *British* community justifies the judicious observation with which Sir Wilfrid Laurier prefaced his anti-conscription declarations of January 17th, 1916: "*The conditions are not the same in Canada as in Great Britain*"; neither are they the same as in Australia, in New-Zealand, or in any other British country.

Can it be hoped that the government and the opposition, that the whole of parliament, will have sufficient good sense and patriotism to understand this? Will they be sufficiently "loyal to England and the Empire" not to commit the capital mistake of delivering Canada to the foreigner?

I do not wish to descend to that species of vituperation which the apostles of official loyalty have so often lavished upon me. In the entire good faith and patriotic *intentions* of the Prime Minister and his colleagues I wish to believe. But really, had they acted in connivence with the German government in order to discover the most efficacious means of destroying the national unity of Canada, during and after the war, they could not have devised any thing better than this conscription proposal.

## Mennonites, Doukhobors, Quakers

The government, it seems, proposes to exempt from compulsory military service the Mennonites, the Doukhobors, the Quakers, etc., because they are forbidden by their religious principles to carry arms. That is just. French-Canadians, respectful as they are of all legitimate liberties, will approve of these exemptions. But if the religious scruples of these new-comers are taken into account, by what right should the government disregard the time-honored traditions of the oldest, the

most thoroughly *national* element of the whole Canadian population? Let there be no mistake: the conviction of the French-Canadian that he is only bound to take up arms to defend the soil of Canada, his *one* country, is as true and as deeply anchored in his heart as the hatred of militarism is in the mind of the Quaker or the Mennonite. Twenty times, a hundred times, he has been promised by the heads of the nation, men of all races and of all parties, that he would never be forced to fight outside of his own territory. These promises have been renewed on many occasions, during the present war, by the rulers of to-day, even by the leader himself who now proposes this tyrannical measure. To impose conscription on the French-Canadians is not only to do violence to their national belief, but also to instil in their hearts hatred and contempt for all rulers, and to destroy in their souls the respect for authority and social order.

Let these words be well pondered: the adoption of conscription will mark for the French-Canadians the beginning of an evolution that will soon transform the most peaceable, perhaps the most orderly, population of the two Americas into a revolutionary people. Once unleashed this revolutionary spirit will not rest; it will not only smart under military rule: it will make itself manifest in the factories, in the fields, everywhere, in all functions of our industrial, social and political life.

The managers of large enterprises, captains of industry, are pleased to acknowledge that the French-Canadian workingmen are the most peaceable, the most respectful of law and public order, the least inclined to be led astray by the declamations and the demagogic appeals of the agitator. Once made "rebels," these workingmen will become the most uncontrollable of insurgents against all social and economic order.

## English-speaking Canadians and Conscription

If the whole of English Canada really desired conscription there would certainly result from that situation the most dangerous of antagonisms. Fortunately this is not the case. The sentiment against conscription is asserting itself and growing in all the English provinces. Of this, convincing proofs are coming daily to light. A referendum would alone reveal the force and extent of this sentiment.

Each race has its special qualities and faults. Our fellow-countrymen of British origin have excellent qualities; foremost must be placed their splendid *esprit de corps*. If the doctrine of national solidarity had been equally practised by French-Canadians the race problems would be much less numerous and difficult to solve. But the reverse of this quality is the extraordinary effect of current and clamoring opinion on the mind of English-speaking Canadians — or rather on their public attitude and utterances.

If I could divulge the secrets of certain intimate conversations, it would be a revelation to know the real opinion of a large number of English-speaking Canadians on the war and the part Canada should have been content with taking in it. The name could be given of one high in Western politics, who stated, more than a year ago: "*Canada has done more than her share in this war.*" It was an important manu-

facturer, an Imperialist, lately a supporter of conscription, who, some five months ago, confessed to me: "If I had your courage, I might demand that recruiting be stopped." It was an eminent professional of Toronto, who, after having ascertained that doors and windows were well closed, whispered in my ear: "I have ceased advocating enlistment and conscription. We ought to put our own house in working order." Such too were certain young Torontonians who, after having denounced in scathing terms the cowardice of the "slackers" of Quebec, confided to each other *mezzo voce*, in the smoking compartment of a Pullman car — not knowing that a good Nationalist heard them: "After all, that d. . . d fellow Bourassa is saving us from conscription."

But what counts far more than all that double game is the genuine sentiment of the masses. Amongst the French-Canadians the secret ballot is, so to speak, a fiction. Everybody proclaims his opinions — even if he changes his mind between two discourses. But in the English provinces the *silent vote* is enormous. It is the silent vote which makes and unmakes governments. It is quite permissible to believe that the silent vote, both labor and agrarian, is opposed to conscription. Will it be given an opportunity to express itself?

### Appeal to the people

The proper method of consulting the people will be dealt with later on. For the moment, I merely affirm that the only means of preventing conscription from further deepening the gulf between the two races — whilst leaving it narrow enough to allow of dangerous blows — is to give to the whole Canadian nation the opportunity of expressing its opinion. If conscription is accepted unreservedly by a clear and absolute majority of the voters, it may be safely assumed that the French-Canadians will submit to it. On the other hand, should the resistance of French Canada to a conscription law voted by a simple parliamentary majority assume extreme proportions, a large number of English-speaking Canadians, although delighted to be rid of the nightmare of conscription, even by the vote of a *solid Quebec*, might allow themselves to be carried away by the coil of blood and seek to commit reprisals.

A consultation of the people is the only safety-valve to prevent a dangerous explosion.

## WHY IMPOSE CONSCRIPTION ?

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### Sir Robert Borden's "emphatic announcement"

We have so far examined the main reasons and facts which militate against the adoption of compulsory military service and against all additional effort for the war. Much more could be said: arguments are superabundant. For the moment, I rest content with the principal and most urgent, those which call for the *immediate* attention of the government and parliament, and of the whole country.

This study, however, would be incomplete, it would be unfair to the government, if I did not endeavor to seek the motives which induced the Prime Minister and his colleagues to arrive at such a grave decision, counter to their previous declarations and their oft-repeated pledges. One must be fair to everybody, even to Ministers and politicians.

Let us leave aside, for the time being, the numerous guarantees given on many occasions to the people of Quebec by their official representatives in the Ottawa Cabinet: Messrs. Casgrain, Blondin, Patenaude and Sévigny. Let us take account only of the positive declaration made by the Prime Minister, at the opening of the session of 1916: "*I made it clear to the people of Canada that we did not propose any conscription. I REPEAT THAT ANNOUNCEMENT TO-DAY WITH EMPHASIS.*"\*

This "emphatic announcement," the Prime Minister made it, in the name of the government, in reply to a pressing appeal from the Leader of the Opposition. "It is important," had said Sir Wilfrid Laurier, "that we should have at once from my right hon. friend the Prime Minister an authoritative statement upon this point." Before making this appeal to the government, the leader of the Liberal party, it will be recalled, pronounced himself strongly against any idea of conscription. The address was voted unanimously, without any appreciable dissent being expressed against the opinion of the Liberal leader or the "emphatic announcement" of the Prime Minister.

Thus it can be truly asserted that, at the session of 1916, the whole of parliament pronounced itself against conscription. The Prime Minister "emphatically" pledged himself not to "propose conscription." This pledge was taken by the head of the State after he had announced that *the strength of the army would be increased to five hundred thousand*

\*Debate on the Address, see Appendix I.

men. This increase — also ratified unanimously by both parties — cannot therefore justify the government in violating to-day the “emphatic” pledge of the Prime Minister.

Since then, Sir Robert and his colleagues have more than once renewed that pledge.

## The Dorchester Election — Ministerial pledges

In December last, one of the leading members of the National Service Commission did me the honor of asking my co-operation in order to induce French-Canadians to fill up the famous blank-card. When he had explained at length the object of the Commission, I asked him this question: “What guarantee will you give us that the National Service enquiry is not, as it was in England, the prelude to conscription?” — “The best,” he replied. “Personally, I was favorable to conscription. *It was Sir Robert Borden himself who persuaded me that it is not practicable in Canada.*” Of the good faith of this gentleman, or of the entire truth of his statement, I had not the slightest doubt. I have still less reason to doubt it to-day, when I know of the *written proofs* showing that such was then the Prime Minister’s opinion.

In January last, Mr. Sévigny was re-elected as a *member of Sir Robert Borden’s cabinet* by promising that there would be no conscription. Another minister of the Crown, Mr. Blondin, endorsed that pledge. No denial came from Sir Robert Borden; nor did he oppose the slightest reservation to their explicit engagement. Those pledges were strongly emphasized in the Government’s paid organ, *L’Événement*. “The electors of Dorchester,” it declared on January 26th, 1917, “are now well advised: *they know that there will never be conscription under the Conservative government.*” This “advice to the electors of Dorchester” held good for the whole country.

Parliament met on January 18th. The speech from the Throne did not contain the slightest allusion to any measure of conscription. The debate on the address was concluded and the Prime Minister left for London, on February 12th, without giving the country the slightest indication that he had changed his mind in regard to the method of enlistment. It was only after his return, on May 18th, that he brusquely launched the bomb.

What happened between February 12th and May 18th, to authorize the Prime Minister and his colleagues to make such a sudden and complete somersault?

Let us give the ministers the full measure of fairness which they may expect. Had grave and sudden changes taken place in the European situation demanding from Canada an extraordinary effort, *impossible to foresee four months ago*, the government would certainly be justified in reversing their decision. And, in doing so, they could rightly claim the support of all those who have unreservedly approved of the full participation of Canada in the European war. On the other hand, the most rabid conscriptionist must admit that if no such change has taken place, the government has not the right to break its most explicit, solemn and oft-repeated pledges, to impose a measure repugnant

to the great body of the people and calculated to disturb the social order of the country and its economic equilibrium. Assuredly nobody wants conscription simply for the pleasure of having the greatest possible number of young and robust men killed. Nobody either, without the gravest reasons, ought to be anxious that the leaders of the nation brand themselves as perjurers and public liars.

### The Prime Minister's somersault; his motives

In his speech of May 18th, Sir Robert Borden brought no serious argument to justify his somersault. With an apparently sincere emotion he spoke of the losses sustained by the Canadian army; he declared that unless new recruits were sent, the number of Canadian soldiers in the trenches would gradually grow less. This is so plainly true as to be equivalent to a platitude. The longer the war lasts, the greater the losses; and if the gaps in the ranks are not filled, evidently the army will diminish. But the Prime Minister knew all this on January 17th, 1916, when he renewed his "emphatic announcement" that conscription was not "proposed." In his statement of May 18th, he added that voluntary enlistments have ceased to give tangible results. This also was known to everybody. It had been proved true long before Messrs. Sévigny and Blondin swore before all the Gods, in Dorchester, that conscription would *never* be resorted to. "Voluntary" enlistments had long been exhausted when *L'Événement* declared, in the name of the ministers and under their inspiration, that "with a Conservative government, conscription would *never* be."

If Sir Robert Borden realized, on the 18th of May, the total and definite failure of voluntary enlistments, it could only be the result of long standing observations. How is it then, that on the 6th of May — just twelve days before the Prime Minister's declaration — one of his colleagues, "Colonel" Blondin, in association with General Lessard, inaugurated a new campaign for "voluntary" recruiting? This campaign was organized under the official patronage of the Minister of Militia; it was intended to cover the whole of the Province of Quebec and to last several weeks, months perhaps. Before the third meeting, the Prime Minister suddenly clipped the wings of his recruiting colleague. Was this appeal to "holy war" nothing but a huge bluff? If, on the 6th of May, the Prime Minister had ceased to believe in "voluntary" recruiting, why did he authorize this gigantic display of humbug? If, on the contrary, he still believed in "voluntary" recruiting, why did he brusquely put an end to the work which his colleague had hardly begun?

Moreover, when Sir Robert Borden pledged himself, on January 17th, 1916, not "to propose conscription," he did not make his promise conditional upon the success of "voluntary" recruiting. On the contrary, it was after having announced that the number of soldiers would be increased to 500,000, that the Prime Minister declared that there would be no conscription. His pledge was not only "emphatic," it was absolute and unconditional.



The pledge that Mr. Sévigny took in the name of "the Conservative government," when re-elected as a member of that government, was also "emphatic," absolute and unconditional.

The argument that "voluntary" recruiting has failed cannot hold against the explicit pledge of January 17th, 1916.

Sir Robert Borden owes it to himself, he owes it to the honor of his colleagues, he owes it to the just exigencies of the country, to give *other and better reasons for his somersault.\**

In order to facilitate the Prime Minister's task, let us now review the circumstances and the motives that may have inspired a decision the gravity of which Sir Robert himself cannot fail to measure — not to speak of the dishonor which awaits him if he does not succeed in justifying himself.

Let us cast a glance over the situation in Europe and see if there has taken place, say since January, some unforeseen and extraordinary event which could authorize the government to violate its pledges and to impose conscription.

Fully examined, there can be reasonably instanced but three new facts, susceptible of modifying the situation of the rival armies and affecting the ultimate result of the war: the renewal of sub-marine warfare, the Russian revolution, and the entrance of the United States into the conflict. None of these events justifies the adoption of conscription in Canada. Each and all of them, on the contrary, militate, not only against conscription, but also against the sending of further troops to Europe.

### Submarine warfare

The sub-marine campaign was not even something new for the original belligerents. All that was new in the decision made by Germany, in January, was to extend the sub-marine attacks to the ships of neutral countries entering the blockaded zones. This extension of sub-marine warfare, it is true, affected the economic situation of the belligerents, that of England especially. But in what way could this be remedied by the enlistment, voluntary or compulsory, of one hundred thousand more Canadians? So little in fact does England rely on land forces to avert this new danger, that she has requested the American government to delay the sending of troops to France, in order to accelerate the construction of ships, the production of food supplies, and their transportation to England.

When the speeches delivered by Mr. Balfour in the United States and Canada are carefully read, not the least reference can be found to the need of troops. On the contrary, the danger of famine is frequently alluded to. Will it be pretended that England, which has no need of American troops, has a greater need of Canadian troops?

If the Canadian Government really desires to help England against famine, let them apply themselves without delay, not to enlisting new

\*In his speech on the second reading of the Military Service Bill, delivered June 18, 1917, the Prime Minister did not see fit to add any new argument to his previous statement.

recruits for the army, but, on the contrary, to cease all recruiting, and make use of all the coordinated energies of the nation in order to stimulate agricultural production and the building of ships.

## The Russian Revolution

The Russian revolution is certainly not a reason, or even a valid pretext, which the Prime Minister can invoke to justify his conscription project. The downfall of the Czar was acclaimed by the Governments at Washington, London and Paris, as a defeat for Germany. For fifteen days, the French and English press was filled up with stories of German intrigues and plots at the Court of "Nicholas Romanoff." The revolution was hailed as a magnificent and glorious uprising of the Russian people against the "traitors" who had been negotiating a secret and separate peace with Germany. The "dictator" of the British Empire, Mr. Lloyd George, even wired to the Russian revolutionists that they had rendered "*the greatest service to the cause of the Allies.*"\*

Sir Robert Borden was in London when this dispatch was framed, sent and published. Each day he was in conference with Mr. Lloyd George. Will he now pretend that this "*greatest service,*" rendered by Russia to the cause of the Allies, should be repaid by the slaughter of a hundred thousand young Canadians, in addition to the four hundred thousand who have been already sacrificed?

## American intervention

The declaration of war by the United States, far from justifying the despatch of new Canadian troops, should, on the contrary, induce the government to put an end to further enlistments. The United States has in this war an interest at least equal to that of Canada. Its population is *fourteen* times more than ours; its wealth is *seventy-four* times greater than that of Canada. For three years the small Canadian nation has been bled bare. Has it not the right to breathe a little and to regain some of its strength, whilst the rich and populous American republic, which as yet has not sacrificed a single soldier, gives its long deferred assistance?

Before the United States had decided to take part in the struggle, when it seemed most likely that it would continue neutral, Sir Robert Borden did not regard conscription as necessary and renewed his promise not to propose it. To-day, when the most powerful of the neutral nations brings to the Allies an unexpected and exceedingly important help — all statesmen and military men bear testimony to that — how can the Prime Minister expect to make us believe that the cause of the Allies demands the lives of one hundred thousand more Canadians?

In the economic order, the same argument applies. Several weeks before the entrance of the United States into the war, the Cana-

\*That dispatch was sent on the 22nd of March.

dian Government found it most urgent to fill the ranks of the agricultural army. It issued a desperate appeal to American farm-laborers. This appeal was published in more than seven hundred newspapers of the United States. The number of farm-laborers to be got at any cost from the United States was estimated by the government at seventy thousand. When war was declared by the President and Congress, about seven thousand Americans had responded to Canada's appeal. Naturally, a quick stop was put at Washington to this drainage of the vital forces of the American nation. Our Minister of Commerce, Sir George Foster, was obliged to write a humble letter in which he pledged the Canadian Government to cease this campaign of labor recruiting. The agricultural army of the Dominion was thus deprived of over sixty thousand men, whom the government had judged, three months before, as absolutely necessary to raise in Canada the food-supplies so pressingly needed in England. This disastrous, perhaps fatal, gap the same government would now double and treble by throwing one hundred thousand more Canadians as food for the minotaur of war !

Look at the contrast. On the one hand, the government of a nation of *one hundred million* people, which has not as yet sacrificed a single man to what is now the common cause, regards it as dangerous and refuses to loan *seventy thousand* of its men to a neighboring and allied nation; on the other hand, the government of a nation of *seven million* people, which has already furnished *four hundred and twenty thousand* of its children to the European butchery, finds it necessary and *patriotic* to conscript one hundred thousand more to be slaughtered for the triumph of "liberty" and "democracy"!! What a tempest of folly and suicide is passing over our heads !

### Necessity of preserving the man-power in Canada

Of all the new facts which have modified the situation since Sir Robert Borden pledged himself not to propose conscription, the one which least justifies his somersault is certainly the entrance of the United States into the war. That fact in itself should be sufficient to induce the government to put an end to all additional recruiting and sending of Canadian troops to Europe. Since the United States entered the war, it has become more imperative than ever that Canada should rally all her vital forces and utilize the whole man-power of the country in order to increase agricultural production — which will alone prevent a food crisis in Europe and America — and the construction of ships required to carry to England its daily bread.

Nevertheless, it was probably the declaration of war by the United States that determined Sir Robert Borden's somersault — not for the advantage of France or England, but for the convenience of the United States itself.

According to an estimate made by the British Recruiting Committee lately organized in New York, there are at present in the United States five hundred thousand Britishers and Canadians of military age. A considerable proportion of these British subjects left the United Kingdom and Canada within the past two years, in order to escape

military service. If the simple fear of conscription, even when repudiated by the Canadian authorities, could drive hundreds of thousands of British subjects across the frontier, it is most likely that millions of Americans would have crossed it in the opposite direction to avoid *certain* conscription in the United States. To prevent this exodus, the American Government would have been compelled to establish a cordon of sentinels from the mouth of the River St. Croix to the shores of San Juan Straits. It was found much more practical and less costly to the United States to have this work done by the Canadian Government. With conscription in both countries the task of chasing up the "slackers" would be enormously simplified.

*It is therefore not to save "democracy" and "civilization" that Canada is threatened with the most odious and bloody of taxes; neither is it to help France and England, nor even to maintain its own army: — it is purely and simply to do the police work of the American Government.*

Everything considered, there lies the only plausible explanation of the Government's incredible change of attitude — far more, in my opinion, than in the decisions of the Imperial War Conference.

### The War Conference in London

That in the secret deliberations of this imperial junta conscription for Canada and Australia was discussed is quite possible, even certain. That the British ministers represented to the delegates of the "sister-nations" the advantage of having an uniform military organization throughout the Empire is most plausible. That the masters of the Empire exercised pressure in order to secure more colonial troops to take the place of those millions of Britishers kept on the land, in the shipyards, in the coal mines or in munition factories, is most likely; and we have no reason to blame the British ministers for that. We get what we deserve. For the last three years, we have foolishly allowed our politicians to boast that Canada is ready to give "her last man and her last dollar" for European nations. Nevertheless, I persist in believing that, without President Wilson's declaration of war and the enactment of conscription by Congress, Sir Robert Borden would not have broken his pledges. Against the reasons which the British ministers might confidentially invoke in favor of conscription in general, the Prime Minister of Canada could not fail to oppose his "emphatic" pledge, and also the positive declarations made in public by British statesmen, all of which militate against the adoption of conscription in Canada at the present time.\*

In any case, whatever the motive, apparent or real, of the Government's decision, Parliament is not justified in voting this bill or *any measure tending to make service for the European war compulsory* without the consent of the people.

\*Since the above lines were written, Sir Robert Borden and Mr. Long, Colonial Secretary, have both stated emphatically that conscription was not even mentioned at the Conference. This makes the case against conscription still stronger. The Conference was called purposely to enable the representatives of the various British nations to confer on the means to be taken by each and all of them in order to achieve victory. If conscription for Canada was not even mentioned at the Conference, can there be better proof that conscription was not considered essential or even useful?

## COALITION AND EXTENSION OF PARLIAMENT

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### Militarism and Autocracy

The plain object of the Prime Minister is to impose conscription by means of a ministerial coalition and a further extension of Parliament. This design reveals an incredible ignorance of the situation.

Canada was thrown into the war by the combined action of the Government and the Opposition. The decision of Parliament was taken in spite of the fact that Canada was bound by no international engagement, by no constitutional or moral obligation, beyond that of defending its own territory, if attacked.\*

Our participation in the European war was decided upon under the pretence of helping Great Britain and her allies in freeing democracy from the yoke of militarism. This noble object was acclaimed by the whole of Parliament. In order to further emphasize its character, Sir Robert Borden and his colleagues, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his followers, vied with each other in repeating time and again that, free and voluntary for the nation, our contribution would remain equally free and voluntary for all Canadians. It was by promising *verbally* and *in writing* not to depart from the principle of voluntary enlistments that the ministers secured precious cooperation in all spheres of the social order.

In now proposing conscription Sir Robert Borden breaks his most solemn promises; as Bethmann-Hollweg, he tears up the "scraps of paper" which bear his signature and that of the entire Parliament. To make overseas' service compulsory is to submit Canada to the régime of "Prussian militarism". If the Prime Minister persists in refusing the people the right to decide the issue, he will violate the essential principles of that "democracy" which he would "save" in Europe at the price of the blood of five hundred thousand Canadians.

Democracy is not a fad of mine, as my usual readers well know. All that is going on in the world at the present hour, in Canada as elsewhere,

\*On this point, no one has been more categorical than Mr. Balfour, in his speech before the Canadian Senate, on May 28. "The Government of the Mother-Country," said he, cannot raise a corporal's guard in Canada, Australia, New-Zealand, or "wherever you will; she cannot raise a shilling of taxation; she has no power". Mr. Bonar Law, then Colonial Secretary, was equally emphatic in his speech delivered in London, September 15, 1916: "These great Dominions are, in fact, independent States. We could not have compelled a single one of them to send a man or contribute a penny".

demonstrates the failure of democracy, the illusion of parliamentarism, the cynical dupe of the party régime. "Popular" governments have shown themselves as powerless to prevent the war as they are to organize victory. To make up<sup>1</sup> for their blunders and faults, they can find nothing better than to resort to the extreme methods of autocracy and militarism.

It has never seemed clear to me that it was the duty of Canada to be hled bare to "save the democracy" of Europe, still less to impose it upon Germans, Austrians and Bulgarians.

Be that as it may, democratic and representative government is in Canada the régime established by law and constitution. It has been in practice for nearly a century. If it was clearly shown that "William Hohenzollern" wished to overthrow this order of things and that he had some material chance of implanting "Prussian militarism" in Canada, I would be the first to sound the call to arms and to respond to it before forcing others to go and fight in my place, as most of our tongue and pen warriors are doing or endeavoring to do.

But what is to be thought of those men who, for three years, have been calling Canadians to the free crusade of democracy against military autocracy, and who are now preparing to impose upon them the most odious form of militarism by violating the basic principles of democracy? Under pretext of combatting the despotism of monarchies "by divine right," will Canadians allow a handful of politicians, without real responsibility, to impose upon them a military oligarchy, and to found a grit, tory or mixed-breed autocracy, an ephemeral dynasty, without prestige, power and glory, lacking all constitutional, historical or moral basis? To prevent the designs, by no means established, of William the Autocrat, shall we permit Robert the Headstrong — even with the cooperation of Wilfrid the Conciliator — to play with our lives and also with the constitution and the established order?\*

## Principles of Democracy

The fundamental principle of democratic institutions, in Canada as in England, is *popular consent* — "*the government in which the ultimate control lies with the people.*" This is the definition given by the most hide-bound, the last perhaps, of British Conservatives, Mr. Balfour, in his recent address to the Canadian Parliament as recorded in our parliamentary archives. It is the very ideal for the triumph of which, according to Mr. Balfour, all British peoples must be prepared to make supreme sacrifices.

How, without violating this principle in its essence as well as in its immediate application, can the Government and Parliament dream of imposing con-cription on the country without submitting their decision to popular sanction. — to the "ultimate control of the people"?

Under the British Constitution, the prerogative of Parliament and the power of the Government are similar to those of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of a joint stock company. The

\*This was written before the rupture of negotiations between Sir Robert Borden and Sir Wilfrid Laurier on the coalition scheme.

extent and duration of the mandate of the representatives of the people are limited by the constitution and by custom, just as the duration and extent of the powers of a company's administrators are defined by the charter and by-laws of the company. In face of a sudden and extraordinary situation, Parliament may adopt exceptional measures, just as the directors of a company may adopt new by-laws; but these exceptional measures are subject to the ultimate decision of the people, just as new regulations must be submitted to a meeting of the shareholders. Neither members of parliament nor directors of companies have the right to override this supreme control by arbitrarily prolonging their mandate; much less has the government or a mere executive committee the right to escape censure and punishment by corruptly purchasing the complicity of the Opposition, or of other directors.

This brief comparative analysis shows how Conscription, Coalition and the Extension of Parliament are indissolubly involved together.

From the viewpoint he has adopted, Sir Robert Borden is right: to impose conscription, he must attempt a coalition of some kind and extend parliament for the duration of the war. Having decided to violate established order on one point, he is bound to violate it on the three. But neither Sir Wilfrid Laurier nor any of his supporters have the right to lend themselves to this triple manoeuvre. All Canadians anxious to maintain public order are under the imperative duty to oppose it by all legitimate means.

### England's false example

It may be objected that in England Parliament has successively sanctioned its own arbitrary extension, the formation of a coalition cabinet, and conscription. The answer to this is simple and easy. In the first place, an abuse of power in London is no justification for an abuse of power at Ottawa. Canada has not conquered its autonomy after a struggle of seventy-five years, simply for the purpose of slavishly copying all that is done in England. Again, on this point, more so perhaps than on any other aspect of the situation, Sir Wilfrid Laurier's words apply: "The conditions are not the same in Canada as in Great Britain."

In England, the right to vote conscription was a mere consequence of the right to declare war. In Canada, neither the Government or Parliament had the right to declare war, still less have they the right to launch the country into a new policy, entirely opposed to a time-honored tradition and to well defined agreements concluded between Great Britain and Canada.

To decide, in August 1914, without the consent of the nation, upon the participation of Canada in the European war, was in itself an abuse of power. To make overseas service compulsory is another abuse of power.

After the repeated declarations of several members of the Cabinet, after Sir Robert Borden's explicit pledge — that conscription would never be proposed, — to establish conscription without the people's consent is nothing short of a cynical provocation to rebellion; it exceeds

the worst acts of "tyranny" so loudly charged by the champions of "democracy" against the "autocrats" of Berlin, Vienna and Constantinople.

### True example of Australia and South-Africa

Instead of always looking to London for an inspiration, why not, now and again, cast a glance at the other self-governing countries of the Empire? Their conditions are much more similar to ours than those of Great Britain. In none of these countries, excepting New Zealand, have they succeeded or even thought of *imposing* conscription. In everyone, elections have been held, without the slightest injury to the Empire or its allies. Nowhere has a coalition government been formed to gag the people.

In Australia, a referendum revealed the strength of the popular opposition to conscription. Compelled to form a Nationalist coalition government. Mr. Hughes had to submit a second time to a general election, and to pledge himself not to impose conscription before having obtained the consent of the people by a second plebiscite.

The example of South-Africa, a country closely resembling Canada in its bi-ethnic character, is still more illuminating. They had no fear, there, of a general election, although it was held at the height of trouble and armed insurrection. General Botha, whose "loyalty" is so often instanced as a model, persistently opposed all idea of conscription. He went as far as refusing his help to voluntary enlistments for the war in Europe. To the few recruits for the Imperial army the South-African government gives a pay very much inferior to that allotted to the soldiers of the South-African militia, who fought only for the Union and never left the continent of Africa.

### Dissolution of Parliament imperative

The same arguments apply to the extension of Parliament.

In England, the duration of Parliament has varied. It is simply a matter of custom. Parliament itself decides it, from time to time.

In Canada, the duration of the life of parliament is strictly determined by an article of the Constitution. In order to prolong their powers for a year, our senators and members, last year, unanimously voted an address which received the sanction of the Imperial Parliament. That in itself was a revolutionary act and a very dangerous precedent. With some other *cranks*, we raised the cry of alarm. Naturally, those isolated protests were promptly silenced by the concerted clamor of both parties.

The Government, this year, is credited with the intention of having a further extension of Parliament voted by a simple majority of votes. It is even claimed that Sir Robert Borden brought back from London the promise that the Imperial Parliament would ratify the decision of an "autocratic" government thus imposed upon a servile and shameless majority. That would be returning to the days of the *Family Compact*.



It would mean that the country is to be governed, not even by a coalition of parties in Canada, but by a clique of English politicians in unison with a clique of Canadian politicians.\*

Even by a unanimous vote, even with conscription left out, Parliament has not the right to repeat the blunder of last year. To impose extension by the brute force of a faction would be a crime. To add to it the arbitrary imposition of conscription is to open the door to the most dangerous reactions.

The simple announcement of the bill aroused popular indignation, not only in Quebec, but in all portions of the Dominion. A few men, to whom the undeceived confidence of the people is now turning, have succeeded in calming popular passion and reducing demagogues to temporary impotence. But let the Government make no mistake: if, wrongfully interpreting the calmness of the moment, they persist in their designs, the second movement will be worse than the first. In that case, it will be the turn of all true friends of order to be reduced to impotence. Demagogues will reign supreme.

*An immediate dissolution of Parliament is the sole safety valve to allow popular sentiment to vent itself without danger to public order.*

### Necessity of a Referendum

But even that will not be sufficient. To a general election there must be added a referendum on the sole issue of conscription.

I shall not delay in discussing at this time the intrinsic merits of this method of consulting the people. That there is in it nothing contrary, as is often pretended, to the principles and practice of British institutions it would be easy to show. At leisure, I would even willingly take up the argument that, within reasonable bounds, the referendum is more conformable to the true principles of social order than the electoral and parliamentary régime. But this is not the time for academic dissertations. Neither do I desire to re-open old controversies and to seek which of us or of our opponents, Liberal or Conservative, had the right to demand or to refuse a referendum under such past circumstances which gave rise to the principles of which present events are a mere consequence.\*\*

For the moment, I confine myself to formulating this simple and elementary truism: if it is admitted that Parliament has not the right to impose conscription without the consent of the people, it must equally be admitted that a referendum alone will permit a clear and unequivocal manifestation of the people's mind.

\*Sir Robert Borden, in his statement of July 17, has intimated that the British Parliament would refuse to sanction the proposed extension, unless it were "determined... by a unanimous, or *practically* unanimous, vote" of the Canadian Parliament. Would this mean that, if the Government had secured for that measure the same vote as was obtained for the Conscription Bill, the British Government would have acceded to Sir Robert Borden's wishes?

\*\*The circumstances here referred to were the adoption of the Navy Act, in 1910, and the proposed Emergency Contribution to the Imperial Navy, in 1913. In both instances, we, Nationalists, demanded a Referendum, which was opposed by both parties.

In a general election, public opinion cannot be expressed on a single question. It is spread over a variety of matters which have been subjects of parliamentary and public discussion for several years. It is compelled to pronounce itself on various problems which the future Parliament will be called upon to solve. Then again it is swayed in different directions by party ties, by individual sympathies for some particular leader or candidate, and by a thousand questions of purely local concern.

Even if it were possible to remove all these obstacles, it would still be impossible, under existing circumstances, to learn the popular feeling on conscription if resort was simply made to the usual electoral consultation.

Let the situation be reduced to a concrete form by supposing the two most probable hypotheses. The Government proposes conscription; the Opposition fights it; some Liberal members vote for conscription, certain Conservatives vote against it\*; or even, simpler still, the Prime Minister moves the first reading of the bill and the leader of the Opposition opposes it; then, in one case or the other,— following the vote in the first case, and before the vote in the second case — Parliament is dissolved. In several constituencies, both candidates will be favorable to conscription: in others, both will be opposed to conscription. How, in either case, will it be possible to count the number of votes opposed or favorable to conscription?

Even if each party in Parliament voted *en bloc*, — one for conscription, the other against — an appeal to the people by a general election would not clear the situation. Such Conservatives as are opposed to conscription could not be expected to vote for a Liberal candidate of whose general policy they disapprove. Likewise, a Liberal conscriptionist would not willingly vote for the Conservative government. And again, what voice would be given to the numerous electors who are opposed not only to conscription, but to all additional effort for the war, or, on the other side, to those who, whilst favorable to the general war policy of the Conservative government, are opposed to conscription only?

### Incitement to trouble

Another combination is spoken of: coalition, a general election, and then conscription — if the coalition ministry is sustained. This would be the most odious of subterfuges. In order to express their opinion, the anti-conscriptionists would be forced to place candidates everywhere in the field against both parties. Through the lack of time and of all preliminary organization, they would be prevented from doing so in most constituencies. The so-called “national” government would thus be enabled, by the most odious fraud, to snatch a verdict apparently favorable to conscription. If such abominable tactics are really dreamed of in official circles, let these words be taken to heart: that manœuvre would be tantamount to a *formal and definitive incitement to insurrection*. Let the government think seriously before

\*This is the situation as it eventually developed.

reducing to exasperation thousands of honest people who only ask the right to freely and peaceably express their opinion. The measure of trickery is full, do not let it overflow.

For my part and for those who have confidence in me, I want clearly to disengage our responsibility. We have succeeded in calming the excitement of the moment. Whatever may happen, we will do everything for the maintenance of public order. But if autocratic and mad politicians take no account of the disinterested advices which are reaching them from all quarters, we will be as powerless as themselves to curb popular anger; and it will not be in the ranks of true Nationalists that the rioters will be found.

## Conclusion

Let us summarize in a concrete form the political situation and its exigencies.

All coalition of parties at the present time would be useless, dangerous and immoral.

The dissolution of Parliament is imperative; Parliament is not only moribund, it is *dead*, morally: *jam factet*.

The present or future Parliament should not adopt conscription; it cannot, in justice and with prudence, impose it upon the country without the consent of the people; and the opinion of the people can only be freely expressed by means of a referendum.

# APPENDIX

## I

### VIEWS OF THE LEADERS

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*Extracts from the Debates of the House of Commons, January 17, 1916, pages 18, 19 and 26:—*

#### Sir WILFRID LAURIER

The speech from the Throne announces that we shall have measures to enable the Government to carry on the war. My right hon. friend the Prime Minister has the first day of this year issued a statement that he was prepared to offer 500,000 men. I shall not to-day discuss whether or not the premature statement of my right hon. friend was exactly on the lines of parliamentary government. I put aside all these questions on such a day as this. I understand that we shall have a statement made upon the offer of 500,000 men, which it seems to me is a large contract, but, again, upon this I pass no judgment. I shall be prepared, and my friends around me will be prepared to listen to, and to discuss in the spirit in which all such propositions should be discussed, the proposition which the Government deems essential to carry on the fight in which we are engaged. But let me say — and I believe that upon this we should have an expression of opinion — that we must repel at once the impression which has been sought to be created that this offer is a preliminary step to conscription. *There is to be no conscription in Canada.* Sir, there has been an attempt made for many years to frighten the people with the spectre of conscription. There are some men in this House, as you know, who in the elections of 1911 stated that the enactment of the naval law was a prelude to conscription. There are men in the Province of Quebec who have been asserting that the moment conscription was adopted in Great Britain, conscription would be adopted or proposed in Canada. The naval law has been for six years on the statute book. It is still there; it has not been repealed, as many members in this House were pledged to repeal it. It is there, and there is yet no conscription. *Conscription has come in England, but conscription is not to come in Canada.* So far as conscription in England is concerned, it would be in bad taste, nay, it would be impertinent for us to attempt to pass any remarks, either of approval or of disapproval with regard to it. For my own part I am free to say that I expected that Great Britain would be able to carry on this stupendous war under her old system of voluntary enlistment. The British Government have thought otherwise; they have thought that the magnitude, the stupendous magnitude of the war we have to face, compelled them to resort to conscription, and the step taken by the government seems to meet with the approval of the great majority of the English people. But, Sir, *the conditions are not the same in Canada as in Great Britain.* The reasons why there can be

no conscription in Canada are obvious. Apart from any other, one paramount reason, which is on top of all the others, is that we could not adopt conscription in Canada without giving a severe blow to our policy of immigration. If we are to pass successfully through the period which is to follow the war, and face the enormous debt which we are accumulating, the enormous expenditure which we are assuming, the best way to do it is to have a wise and broad policy of immigration so as to develop our resources. But if it were to be known that conscription existed in Canada, it would, I repeat, deal a severe blow to our hopes in that respect. Why, the very thought of conscription has had a detrimental effect on our settlements in the Northwest.

My attention has been called to a letter published in the New York American of December 26, in which the following statement from a correspondent in Omaha appears:

"Five or six years ago a hundred thousand of Iowa and Nebraska's finest young farmers broke away from their homes and went into Western Canada to take up homesteads and make their fortunes.

"And now these same young men are simply falling over themselves to get back to the old farms in the American west. Hundreds of them are passing through Omaha every week. Some walked across the border—sneaked their way across, in fact, because they feared they would not be permitted to leave Canada.

"Others purchased round-trip railroad tickets and showed the return portion as proof that they were going into the "States" on a visit only. Some had a little cash when the time came for them to get out of the Dominion, but others were forced to write back to the "old folks" for money with which to pay their way back to the old farm. They are all fleeing from threatened conscription."

When I read that I took some measures to obtain confirmation or information regarding it. I must say that my information, while not complete, has satisfied me that the statement is very much exaggerated. That there is some foundation for it I believe, but I do not think the movement has assumed such proportions as are here indicated. At all events, there is enough to show that it is important that we should have at once from my right hon. friend the Prime Minister an authoritative statement upon this point.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN

My right hon. friend has alluded to conscription—to the idea in this country or elsewhere that there may be conscription in Canada. In speaking in the first two or three months of this war *I made it clear to the people of Canada that we did not propose any conscription. I repeat that announcement to-day with emphasis.*

\* \* \*

## II

### RESOLUTION OF PROTEST — PETITIONS

*Text of the Resolution unanimously adopted at a public meeting held at the Monument National, June 7, 1917:—*

"We citizens of Canada and loyal subjects of the King, prepared as we are to defend the territory of Canada against all foreign attacks, are equally determined

to defend the autonomy of Canada and the liberties of its citizens against every aggression from within.

"We denounce all proposals of conscription for oversea's service, because they violate the principles of our constitution and the secular traditions of our country: and we declare that the Government and Parliament of Canada have no right to enforce conscription without the explicit consent of the majority of the electorate, as expressed in a referendum.

"We believe that all new efforts on the part of the nation should be directed to the sole object of reorganizing the economic forces of the country, and of supplying the allied nations, whose cause Canada has joined, England especially, with the food-stuffs which they so insistently ask for."

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*Text of the Petitions circulated by the "Ligue patriotique des intérêts canadiens":—*

**To the Honourable the House of Commons in Parliament Assembled**

The petition of the undersigned inhabitants of..... in the Province of..... respectfully represents:

10. That on the 17th of January 1916, the Right Honourable Sir Robert Borden, Prime Minister, said:—"I made it clear to the people of Canada that we did not propose any conscription. I repeat that announcement to-day with emphasis."

20. That on the same day, the Right Honourable Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Leader of the Opposition, declared:—"There is to be no conscription in Canada";

Your petitioners relying upon these declarations, therefore pray that your Honourable Body do not pass any act or resolution enacting conscription for overseas' service, or tending to make that service compulsory.

**To the Members of the House of Commons of Canada**

We, Canadian mothers, ready as we are freely to give our sons for the defence of Canadian territory, but relying upon the guarantees given, on the 17th of January, 1916, by the Right Honourable Sir Robert Borden, Prime-Minister, and the Right Honourable Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Leader of the Opposition, pray you earnestly not to adopt any measure tending to apply compulsion to military service overseas.

