

**Scotch
Canadians
and
The War**

**CAN NO LONGER FOLLOW
SIR WILFRID LAURIER**

**Canada's Noble Fighting
Force at the Front must
not be deserted**

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Scotch-Canadians.

Perhaps to no other class in Canada does the coming election bring so many conflicting thoughts as to those who heretofore have called themselves Liberal Scotch-Canadians. No class has stuck closer to its political leaders and to its political beliefs during the half century of Confederation; no politician ever had any misgivings as to how the Liberal Scotch-Canadians would vote, none doubted for a moment their unwavering allegiance to the cause of Liberalism. To them for a quarter of a century Sir Wilfrid Laurier has been more than a leader, almost a demigod. Their admiration for Sir Wilfrid has been reciprocal, and in scores of speeches Sir Wilfrid has gone out of his way to say a kind word for the good qualities of the Scotch-Canadians. And so the Liberal Leader has been followed through the school question, through his tariff policies, his navy policy, and their faith has never been shaken. To their minds Sir Wilfrid has always been right; his opponents wrong.

But now in the twilight of his illustrious career, can the Scotch-Canadians follow Sir Wilfrid on the one outstanding irrepressible question of the hour—the issue that strikes to the very homes of Canadians—are the Canadians on the fighting front to have adequate reinforcements, or is Canada to “slink” or sneak out of the war? That is the question each Scotch-Canadian, man or woman, must answer for himself or herself on December 17. There is no evading it; that is the issue, “nothing else in God’s world matters”; a straight question requiring a straight answer. On December 17, Canada votes to stay in the fight against the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs or votes to quit. The Union Government policy is to stay; the referendum policy of Sir Wilfrid, tagged by the prayers of Bourassa and the Nationalist following to repeal the Military Service Act, means to quit. The intelligence of the Scotch-Canadians, when they study the question, will accept no other conclusion. **Referendum means delay when the wastage among Canadian troops is greater than the voluntary recruiting.** The immediate enforcement of the Military Service Act means adequate backing up to those brave men in Flanders. In this crisis Sir Wilfrid is wrong. We believe he’s honestly wrong. No one who has followed his career closely would impute anything else. As a party leader it is his privilege to father the referendum policy, but it is the privilege of Scotch-Canadians to vote as they please. **In this policy Sir Wilfrid has taken a course which Scotch-Canadians cannot follow.**

And why? Simply because men in whose veins run Scottish blood will never quit. Too much Scottish blood has stained the heather in years that are past; too much Scottish blood has flowed on the “far flung battle line,” gaining honor and freedom, for present day bearers of Scottish names to quit on this the greatest of all fights for freedom. Too many young men from Canada once showing in frank open faces their Scottish ancestry lie beneath “where poppies blow in Flanders’ fields”; too many young men of the same gallant breed are still fighting and suffering in the same Flanders’ fields—too many of them for Scotch-Canadians at home to think of voting to quit in this war. And yet that is what the Laurier-Liberal policy means. The party hacks and partisans of former political contests may rant and rave over the “constitutionality of it,” may argue over the labor shortage, may shout themselves blind over other side issues, but the Scotch-Canadian voter should and will remember that that policy means to “Slink out of the war.”

What the Casualty Lists Tell

Whether in the kilt or the less picturesque kiki, the Scotch-Canadians have given of their best. The dreadful casualty lists reveal the price the race is paying that freedom may live. The casualty lists tell of the toll of Scotch-Canadian lives, and of Scotch-Canadian suffering. Here is one example, and

one that has, so far as the writer knows, been overlooked by all commentators of the war, but one which stands the acid test. Taking the casualty lists as they came from Passchendaele Ridge the other day in one newspaper column, an authority on Scotch names, figured that 35 per cent. were Scottish; another column 23; another 34, then 23, 29, and 42, making an average of 31 per cent. from six Canadian casualty lists that were Scottish names. Nearly a third of those names belong to a proud race. German bullets and German shells are no respecters of nationality, so is it not a fair deduction that nearly a third of Canada's fighting force are Scotch-Canadians?

Will the people at home desert that fighting force? Do the Scotch-Canadian people who remain behind want to see these boys further decimated till the four divisions dwindle to three and so on, or do they want to see that force augmented and still flourishing when victory comes? If Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his present followers have their way the voices of that Scotch-Canadian third of Canada's army, crying for help, will be as voices crying in the wilderness. If the Union Government plan is followed that gallant third of Canada's army will be heartened and cheered by a constant stream of reinforcements. There can be no breaking faith with those ten thousand Scotch-Canadian dead lying behind those battle lines. Even in this appeal to the Scotch-Canadian can be found a place for the tribute of an English war correspondent, Perry Robinson of the *London Times*. He wrote:

"In the middle of the waste on the summit of Vimy Ridge there is a little group of white painted wooden crosses marking the graves of the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, who fell in the capture of the Ridge. These Canadian Seaforths were mostly British Columbians. A long, long way they came to die, these long-limbed sons of Victoria, Vancouver, Westminster, and Nanaimo. Some came even farther, for they came from the far off slopes and peaks of the mountains, or the upper waters of Fraser river, when they heard the call.

"Many other feet will tread the same journey after them, the feet of pilgrims, who through generations yet to be born, will come here as to a shrine. The little graveyard will be as a flame of inspiration to Canada in the ages, for there was nothing finer done in the war than the achievement of those western men on that ridge."

And earlier, on April 22, 1915, during the second battle of Ypres, when the Canadian Kilted regiments faced unmasked that first German gas wave, and fought to the last round and the last man; how in a moment of awful peril the bravest Scotch-Canadians were sacrificed, and not a Canadian gun was lost. When one battalion, the 48th Highlanders of Toronto, showed 629 killed, wounded or missing out of 1,212 effectives. Did these men die in vain? Is a Scotch-Canadian going to render their sacrifice valueless by voting Canada out of the war to align herself with the Socialist-crazed nation of Russia?

*Sons in my gates of the West,
Where the long tides foam in the dark of the pine,
And the cornlands crowd to the dim sky line,
And wide as the air are the meadows of kine,
What cheer from my gates of the West?*

What cheer indeed from the policy of Sir Wilfrid, from the plan of Bourassa, from the plan of Lemieux? What cheer in a referendum, what cheer in delay and repeal for Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie, himself the bearer of a Scottish name? What cheer if Canada votes for the Laurier-Liberals, for those Scotch-Canadians wearing the insignia of the Maple Leaf. What cheer?

When the Test Will Come

On December 17, the Scotch-Canadians have the opportunity to show that the blood of the old land has not been watered thin. There is no doubt about the war spirit in Scotland—where this war's casualties are greater in proportion

to population than in any other belligerent. Here is a story illustrating the war spirit of Scotland, which may perhaps hearten a drooping heart in Canada. A Canadian officer was making a tour of Scotland and stopped to talk to a young woman with two tiny children.

"My husband is in one of the Highland regiments, the Argylls," she volunteered after a little introductory conversation.

"There are only two young men left in this village who have not gone to war," she continued, "and they will have to be out of here tomorrow, or they will hear from the women."

"You Scotch women are very hard on the men," replied the Canadian. "You are sending them all to war. There won't be any left. Why did you with those two little children let your husband go to war?"

This seemed to stagger her for a moment, then she drew herself up scornfully, and turning on the Canadian with her eyes fairly blazing, she said:

"I am a Cameron, sir, I would never have spoken to him again if he had not volunteered to go to the war."

That is the spirit of Auld Scotia; the same brave spirit that was in the hearts of the Scottish-Canadian pioneers in Canada; the same spirit that's there today—the spirit that can surmount the party tie, the party shibboleths, for the only cause that matters till the fight is won.

It will be hard for those sturdy Scotch-Canadian Liberals to break with Sir Wilfrid Laurier, because it is ingrained into Scottish hearts to be true to one's friends. But here is an issue so momentous, so utterly without precedent, so serious, that one cannot remain behind one man, simply because he has had a clean and honored past.

And so this appeal is made to Scotch-Canadians to see, amid conflicting doubts, the only thing that matters—is Canada to stay in the war or is she to "slink out?" There is no other expression to qualify this plea from Bourassa and his followers to repeal the Military Service Act than to "slink out of the war".

And after the ballots are counted on December 17, what is the message to be flashed throughout the world and to those splendid men steadily pushing back the Hun? Will the message be heartening to Germany or heartening to the Allies? On the Scotch-Canadians rests a good deal of the burden of the answer. Many of them, perhaps, the majority of them, have loyally followed Sir Wilfrid in the past. They cannot follow him now, forgetting those 10,000 Scotch-Canadians dead, forgetting those scores of thousands of Scotch-Canadians still grimly fighting on, forgetting the proud history of those hallowed crags and glens over the sea. A man or a woman with Scotch blood in his or her veins, to slink out of the war, to perhaps have to dance to the tune Henri Bourassa plays, never! Rather let the words of Robert Burns still inspire as they have inspired countless thousands gone before:

*Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Traitor! coward! turn and flee!*

*Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Forward! let us do, or die!*



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