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"DUTY IS THE SUBJECT OF MY STORY"

CANADA AT WAR

SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

Hon. CHARLES J. DOHERTY

K.C., LL.D.

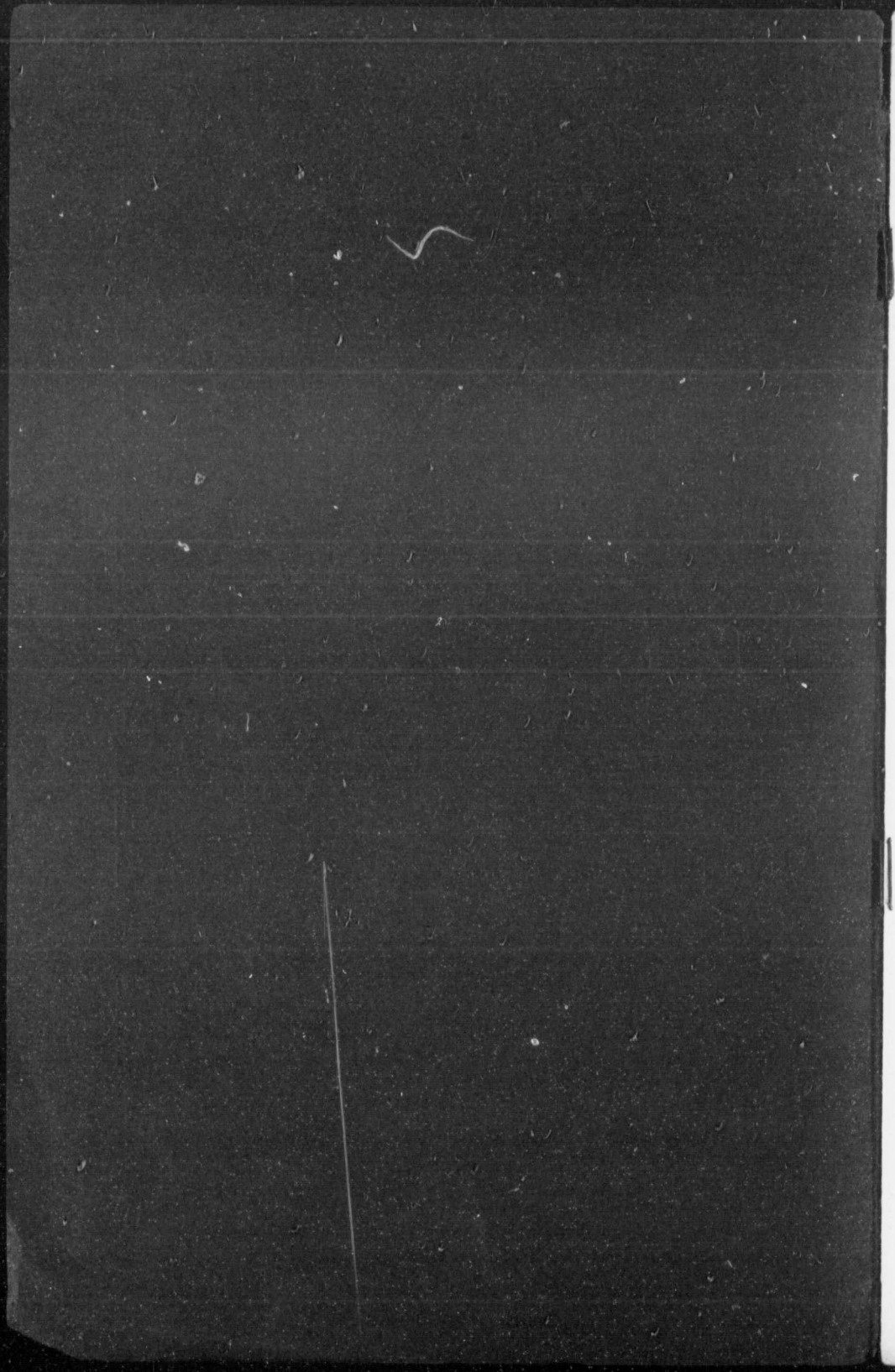
IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS

ON

The Military Service Act, 1917

JULY 5, 1917



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CANADA

House of Commons Debates

OFFICIAL REPORT.

SPEECH

OF

HON. C. J. DOHERTY

Minister of Justice

ON

The Military Service Act, 1917

In the House of Commons, Ottawa, on Thursday, July 5, 1917.

Hon. C. J. DOHERTY (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend from Montcalm (Mr. Lafortune), who has showered me with some compliments, and who made some observations with regard to me not quite so complimentary, will pardon me if I do not undertake to take up seriatim the different matters which he has dealt with in his somewhat prolonged address. The question with which we are concerned presents itself to my mind from a very different point of view from that from which the hon. gentleman evidently looks at it. I may have occasion to refer, as I proceed, to one or two of the subjects to which he has adverted, but he will forgive me if, before doing that, I say something that seems to me vital to be said in connection with the consideration of this very momentous question. More than one hon. gentleman in this House has already said—and many of them among those who are supporting this measure—that the idea of compulsion in itself was repugnant to them. Some of them have gone further and claimed to entertain a special and superlative repugnance to it. Let me say that none among them more than I finds it repugnant in itself.

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And when I say it is repugnant in itself, let it be understood that I do not mean to say merely that it is repugnant to me, looking at it from the point of view of my being the person, or among the persons, to be subjected to it. It is repugnant to me in that sense, but it is vastly more so to find myself in a position where it becomes my duty to be one among those who say that now, and at this time, it is necessary that compulsion, in the manner provided in this Bill, should be imposed upon others, in order that Canada may do her entire duty, and that she may do it in the method which shall so operate as to make the performance of that duty impair, in the least possible degree, the performance of other duties that are incumbent upon her and her people to-day, and impose upon her—although that is a secondary consideration—the least possible sacrifice.

5 p.m. Mr. Speaker, duty is the subject of my story. I have listened to a large part of this debate, I have read the remarks of those hon. gentlemen whom it was not my privilege to hear, and let me say to you in all frankness, that I have waited till this moment in this debate

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before speaking myself, to see whether, among all the able men who have taken part in it, among particularly the many able men who have spoken in opposition to this measure, any one of them would advance a reason that would justify me in saying that it was not my duty to continue to give the Bill my support.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. DOHERTY: If, with all the great intellectual power that these gentlemen possess; if, with all the research that they have given to the examination of the question, if with all the zeal that inspired them to find that sufficient reason, they have not succeeded in finding it,—and I would have welcomed that reason—it looks to me clear, as it did when this measure was proposed, and as when I gave my assent to the suggestion that it should be proposed, that it was the duty of this Government to propose it, and that it still is the duty of this Government and of the members of this House to support it. I respect the views of every man, and I have no quarrel with those whose consciences inspire in them the belief that their duty lies in another direction. For me the path of duty is absolutely clear with regard to this question, and it is because that path of duty is so clear that I find myself today impelled to intervene in this debate at this last moment.

I have said that duty is the subject of my story. If I intervene in this debate, it is because I fain would emphasize, so far as it may be possible for me to do, the necessity—I would rather say the obligation—that in my judgment lies upon one and all of us to concentrate our minds in our dealing with this question upon that one thing: our duty to Canada. So concentrating our minds, let me say, Mr. Speaker, I think that it would be well for all of us to try, for the time being at all events, to put aside many considerations which might naturally influence each and every one of us in arriving at a conclusion as to what our own individual course of action upon the question should be. Let me not be misunderstood. I am not undertaking to criticise what other hon. members may have considered it their duty to say, as supporting one view or the other upon this measure, but I permit myself to say that it has been a matter of very great regret to me, as I have sat here listening to this debate, to see how far and to what extent it had drifted into inter-provincial and inter-racial—shall I say re-

criminations? I do not want to use any harsh language, but I think perhaps that word is not stronger than may be properly applied. It strikes me that there is no question, considered by itself, that it should have been so possible to debate, without any reference whatsoever to the race of any man, or to the province from which he came.

The hon. gentleman (Mr. Lafortune) who has just resumed his seat has found fault with one gentleman and another, whose names he has mentioned, on this side of the House, because, as he said, they sat silent and said no word in defence of the province of Quebec. May I be permitted to say, Mr. Speaker, that in this wide Dominion there is no province, in my judgment, of which a man may be more proud to be a citizen than my native province of Quebec. I have no apologies to make for her. She holds her place in this Confederation, and it is good for this Confederation that she does. We live in that province, men of different races and creeds, and may I be permitted to suggest that we be left to ourselves to deal with the faults and the virtues of the province of Quebec? That is equally true if you reverse the situation. May I not say to my friends from the province of Quebec that in the discussion of this question, perhaps it was not necessary that we should refer to the faults and the virtues of our fellow Canadians from the province of Ontario. Can we not for the moment forget those things? Can we not too forget the differences of race that exist? Things have been said from one point of view and from the other that, frankly, I do not think it could have been pleasant for any Canadian to hear. It does seem to me that it was most unfortunate that it should have been thought necessary to say these things in the discussion of a question whose decision is of such vast import to this our common country, and in regard to which it is of such prime importance that whatever that decision be, it may, when it is once reached, be presented for acceptance to a united people.

We are of different races in this country, but we are all Canadians. I have suggested that we forget for the moment that we are of different races. I do not want to suggest that it is desirable that we should drive from our memories the history of our progenitors. I firmly believe that there is no greater or more overpowering influence that directs the actions of men than the race feeling, and no call which men respond to more readily than that of the blood. It works for great and good results. I am not

here, therefore, to suggest to anybody that it is his duty to forget those from whom he descends, or to repudiate the race to which he belongs. But, there is a time and a place for everything. Here, to-day, when we are dealing with a question, a right or a wrong decision on which will carry with it consequences that none of us can foresee—consequences that will have to be borne, not by ourselves alone, but by our children and our children's children for many generations—am I not right in saying that it is incumbent upon us to concentrate our minds upon the one fact that we are all Canadians, and that this is a question of what is the duty of Canadians to Canada here and now.

I would have made no reference to the matter of which I am about to speak if the hon. gentleman who has just resumed his seat (Mr. Lafortune) had not taken upon himself the responsibility of telling you, Mr. Speaker, and this House, not only what my constituents in the division of Montreal, St. Anne, thought about this question, but that he has come here to tell us the settled conviction of every Canadian of Irish blood within this country, and he says that they are all convinced the same way. The hon. gentleman will allow me to question his authority for making that statement. The men of my blood speak for themselves, and the men of my blood who have the glorious privilege of being Canadians, are as thorough Canadians as breathe within the limits of the territory of this country. They do not need the direction of my very good and very highly esteemed friend from Montcalm to tell them what they ought to think about this subject.

The hon. gentleman was eloquent about the lack of mandate with regard to a great many other things, and as he spoke I asked myself whence came 'us mandate to speak in this House for all Canadians of the Irish race.

There was not one exception; he knew all about it. Then he bewailed my sad fate: that I should be standing alone, separated from them all. I thank him for his sympathy, but I do not feel that I need it.

The people of my race are as intelligent a people—I am paying them a high compliment when I say that—as the people of the race of the hon. member for Montcalm. That means that they are quite capable of judging for themselves, and that they will consider this matter from the standpoint of Canadians anxious to do their duty. I do not doubt that there will be differences of

opinion among them; some will reach one conclusion, and some will reach another. But they will not, as the member for Montcalm says they will, in one body pronounce themselves absolutely on one side of a question, with regard to which there are arguments serious pro and arguments serious con. The hon. gentleman is entirely mistaken when he undertakes the responsibility of making that suggestion. He will allow me, further, to submit that he is a little rash in assuming that responsibility simply as the result of attendance at a meeting convened by gentlemen, all of them my very good and very highly esteemed friends, but all of them members of the Liberal party in Montreal. The member for Montcalm went to that meeting and, in consequence, apparently considers that to him has been handed over, as it were, the entire Irish race in Canada, and he comes here and represents that the Irish race in Canada are throwing their weight and judgment in one scale in regard to this matter. That is not exceedingly modest on his part; moreover, I do not know that it is quite respectful to the people for whom he undertook to speak. Nothing is more dangerous than for a man of one race to speak for the people of another, unless it be a man of one race to undertake to instruct the people of another in regard to their duty. I should have made no reference at all to the race to which I belong if it had not been for the somewhat extraordinary undertaking of the hon. member for Montcalm. When I go back to my constituents to render an account of what I have said, what I have done, and what I purpose doing on this question, I shall go to meet them all as Canadians, of whatever race they may be, and I shall make my justification to them all. It would be a matter of great regret to me if these Canadians of my own race should disagree with me upon this question. But they will exercise their judgment, and they will credit me with the sincerity for which I give credit to them and to the men of any other race who may reach a conclusion different from my own. But I shall not ask the member for Montcalm to intervene or to mediate between me and my constituents, of whatever race they may be. I shall go forth with a good conscience; I shall meet all my friends in St. Anne's and whatever their view may be they will greet me as they have greeted me in the past, notwithstanding this judgment upon me by the hon. member for Montcalm. Down in St. Anne's we do have differences

of opinion, differences of race, differences upon political questions. But I am proud to say that we live together as good friends, having confidence and trust in each other, and that we can maintain that condition of affairs without the kind attention of the hon. member for Montcalm.

I have said that we ought to get rid of all consideration of the fact that we are of different races or different creeds, or that we come from different provinces, because at this time one great question concerns our common country, Canada. I have said a word about my feeling for my own province of Quebec; I felt that I owed it that. But since we have had questions of race, may I add one word about the race that has been criticised in this House. I question no man's right to say what he believes to be pertinent and relevant; and I am in the judgment of every other member of the House whether what I say be proper or not. But in view of what has been said, I desire to dissociate myself—I go further and say that I absolutely dissociate this Government—from any suggestion that anything in this measure is directed against any one part of the country, against the province of Quebec, against any one race in the country, or in particular against the French-Canadian people. I have heard the criticism, and I have heard the defence. To me, there is one overpowering, all-answering defence, and that is that we proceeded to recruit under a voluntary system. What does recruiting under a voluntary system mean? It means that this Government and this Parliament and the Canadian public practically unanimously took the position that upon the question of recruiting each man was absolutely free to act according to his own judgment and his own conscience. Nobody took the responsibility of indicating that a man had any duty to discharge one way or the other. The principle of voluntary recruitment means that every man has the right to decide for himself; that his responsibility is to his own conscience. That being the case, I do not think that it is within the jurisdiction of any one to condemn a man because he exercised a recognized right. On the other hand, I have heard much that was said as against the criticisms made; and, frankly, a good deal of that I would be just as glad not to have heard. I do not undertake to determine whether these contentions were well founded. At any rate they did not seem to me to be quite necessary; sometimes one may be on the defensive, and still overlap a little into unneces-

sary offensive. I should like to get out of that atmosphere; I should like to approach this question purely and simply from the point of view of a Canadian.

What is the question? The question is: What is Canada's duty at this moment under conditions as they exist now? In August of 1914, Canada went to war. It is not very material now to discuss why she went to war. She went to war of her own volition, as was evidenced by the unanimous action of the membership of this House, enthusiastically endorsed by the voice of practically all the people of Canada. Since then she has been at war, and to-day in the first place the question is: Should she withdraw from that war? In my opinion that is the one question, because we must either go forward to enact this Bill or we should withdraw from the war. I know that other people whose opinions I respect do not look at the matter in that way, but that is the way it presents itself to my mind. Why do I say that? We have a certain force at the front. I have not heard it suggested that the force that has gone to the front is greater than represents Canada's fair share in this common enterprise into which we have gone with Great Britain and the Allied Nations. This measure proposes what? To send an additional force? To add people to our force? This measure purposes providing reinforcements so that the force that is at the front may be maintained. It seems to me either we must provide those reinforcements, or we must withdraw from the war, because our force at the front is, day by day, being depleted. There are people who say that we never should have gone into the war, and people who say: Now we have exhausted our effort we should go no further; let our battalions disappear, and let Canada cease to be known as an active participant in this great struggle for the defence of Christian civilization upon this globe. Those men, in my opinion, are absolutely logical when they say: No conscription. I do not say they are right, because I do not agree with their premises. But the men who say that we ought to go on with this war, but that we ought not to take to-day, under the conditions of to-day, the step that this measure purposes taking, are, in my judgment—I speak with all respect—absolutely illogical. I say that for two reasons. In the first place, I do not know and I do not care whose is the fault or what are the causes that brought it about, but I do know that persistence in the voluntary system is not bringing us the men

as fast as they are required. I have not heard that statement seriously controverted. The second reason comes to me from the arguments I have heard against conscription. As I have said I have listened and I have read attentively and carefully, looking for the reason that would justify my withdrawing from the position that I have taken, and I have not found it. But among the reasons that I have listened to, the one that struck me as having very considerable force, was the argument based upon the assertion that, under present conditions in Canada, we need and we can use every man for purposes of a nature to give more valuable and more effective support for the armies of the Allies than we can give by sending him to war. I have been impressed by that argument. If the facts upon which it is made to rest were established to me, I am not at this moment prepared to say that I might not think that was the reason that would relieve me of this duty that to-day weighs so heavily upon my shoulders. But I say that out of that argument has come to me the conclusive reason why we should proceed, (if we are not going to drop out of this war and send no more men) to obtain our men by selective conscription. If the statements of fact upon which some hon. members advanced that argument, be absolutely sound, what will this measure do? It will establish their soundness. I wondered often as I listened to the discussion in this House, and I wondered more as I read discussions out of this House, to what extent this measure had been read and its principle grasped by the people of this country. In the face of what I have just stated, this measure is strenuously resisted by people who say that we must not send another man because we cannot spare another man. If hon. members have confidence in their affirmation, why do they so strongly oppose our finding out whether it is true or not? For my part I am quite satisfied that they are mistaken. I think, as has been said repeatedly in this House, we all of us have before our eyes to-day the evidence that they are mistaken.

Mr. MEDERIC MARTIN: Does the Minister of Justice mean by his statement that Lord Shaughnessy was mistaken when, on his coming here from England, he said that the only thing to do was to produce for the Allies?

Mr. DOHERTY: I have not suggested that we should not produce for the Allies.

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and I think if the hon. member will wait until I get through he will see there is no contradiction between what I am saying and Lord Shaughnessy's proposition, even as he states it, though I am very far from believing that he states it correctly. Lord Shaughnessy and a great many others—and I have no criticism to make—have insisted upon the importance of our producing to help the Allies. I am not aware that Lord Shaughnessy has ever said that that was the only thing we had to do. We have many duties in this matter; we are trying to deal with one of them now, and at the proper time and the proper place I trust we shall be able to overtake all our duties. But the way to get all those duties done is not to tie this House up indefinitely in resistance to the measure that is proposed to do one duty, and the one which seems to us to present the most imperious call upon us.

To me the second and the conclusive argument why we should proceed to get the men we want by this measure of selective conscription rather than by voluntary enlistment—even if voluntary enlistment were producing men as fast as it did in its best days—lies in what those hon. gentlemen have put forward as the very basis for their affirmation that we should have no conscription at all. Just to the extent that they are right in their facts, just to the extent that we cannot spare men from Canada, does it become imperatively necessary for us to see that when we send more men we shall send those and those only who can be spared. This is a measure to ascertain who can be spared, and because they argue that nobody can be spared, gentlemen get up and say: "You must stop right here; you must not find out who can be spared. We tell you nobody can be spared, so stop your measure." What are they apprehensive of? Can they be so convinced that nobody can be spared, when they are so frightened of inquiry being made whether anybody can be spared? I do not agree with them in their statement that nobody can be spared? I am absolutely confident that there are still many men whom we can spare for this great work which is essential for the maintenance of Canada's honour. I am willing to take the risk of having the matter fully and carefully investigated as under this measure it is proposed to be investigated and I shall have to take the consequences if that investigation proves me to be wrong. So I say that just because it is true that we have reached the stage where we have to scrutinize carefully just whom we can spare and whom we cannot, it has become the duty

of the Government of this country and of the members of this House and of the people of this country to say to the voluntary system: Halt there. We cannot afford to let who will go. Many of those who would go, we need at home and as the Act says, it is more in the national interest that they should remain at home than enlist: Canada needs those men. If we continued with the voluntary system, what has happened in the past would undoubtedly be repeated in the future; the men most valuable at home would go, as they have gone before, and the men who might make excellent soldiers but who are doing no useful work at home would stay in Canada and help consume the very products that we are urged to save so as to send them to Great Britain and the Allies.

To me at least it seems quite clear that we owe it to Canada to see that there shall be a selection of the men who are to go, and that those go who can be spared, and those stay who are absolutely needed at home. As I have said that reason has come to me as the result of reflection on the strongest argument put forward as a reason against sending anybody at all, namely, that we could not spare a man. I do not believe that latter proposition, but I do believe that there is this element of truth in it: that the time has come when it behooves us to carefully scrutinize the men who go and the men who stay. That being so, it becomes the duty of those who are responsible for seeing that Canada does her full duty in this war, to take steps that will bring about the result that the man most useful as a soldier shall be a soldier and that the man most useful for the great work of production and for maintaining our people here at home shall be utilized for that purpose, or at all events that he shall have the opportunity of turning his energies to the fulfilment of that purpose.

Bear in mind, Mr. Speaker, that it might be absolutely true that we need in this country every man for the work of production, agricultural and industrial, and it might be true at the same time that there were many men in this country whom we could let go, because, unfortunately, every man who is at home here is not helping in the work of industrial and agricultural production, and so far I have not heard it suggested that there is any method by which the men who are doing nothing can be compelled to work in industrial or agricultural production. It is quite possible that the

men who are not so engaged, whether that ought to be or not, might, under military discipline, make good soldiers. Canada cannot abandon her effort, and I am not going to discuss that, because, if what has already been said in this House has not convinced those who heard it, that Canada cannot in honour abandon her effort, then for my part I abandon hope of carrying that conviction to their minds. That is my starting point, and I think that the general sense of this House is that that is true. If we are to do our duty there is only one course open to us, and that is that we should provide additional men by selective conscription, not to save this man or that man from going to the war, not as some hon. gentlemen are at pains to insinuate, because we are looking for a method of discrimination between one man and another, but in order that we may see to it that both of Canada's duties are performed, one of which duties is that to which my hon. friend from St. Mary's (Mr. Martin) attaches such great importance.

Let me say just a few words on what this measure means. It has struck me, in listening to this debate, that it might not have been a bad idea if we had departed from the usual practice and first examined the provisions of the Bill in order to grasp and thoroughly understand its principle. Had we done this, I think we should have been in a better position to discuss the measure. Much of the debate has been upon a principle of conscription, assumed to mean a system under which every man from twenty to forty-five years of age, without regard to condition, domestic relations, occupation, or the distress which might fall upon an abandoned family, was to be taken by force and marched out to the war. And a great deal of the public opinion that my hon. friend from Montcalm (Mr. Lafortune) sought to show by promenading us from parish to parish in the province of Quebec, is based upon the representation that that is what is proposed to be done. But when you look at the Bill you find that it restricts the number of men to be raised to one hundred thousand. Note, that is not a minimum, but a maximum. In the second place, the Bill provides means intended to enable us to ascertain, as I have already said, who can be spared. We have had some criticism of the proposed system. Some hon. gentlemen say it will give an advantage to the rich man at the expense of the poor. If I am not mistaken the hon. member for Pictou (Mr. Macdonald) said it was a system under which discrimination of all sorts was possible; that the measure

had been prepared for the very purpose of making discrimination on racial, or provincial, or religious lines, or discrimination as between the rich man and the poor. That was far from the minds of those who drafted the measure. And, more than that, it has been stated by the Prime Minister that suggestions for the improvement of the Bill will be welcomed. Let me say to the hon. members who are at such great pains to have it go forth to the people that there is a desire to discriminate against the poor or against any other class: Come with your suggestion, and it will be welcomed; if you have a better method, to make it sure that there shall be no discrimination, let us know what it is. There is no other desire in the heart of anybody who stands behind the Bill than to find the most effective method of preventing discrimination of any kind. Under this Bill the rich man's son will go under the same conditions as the poor man's son; the man of any province the man of any race, the man of one religion, will go absolutely under the same conditions as the man of another. There is, from beginning to end of this Bill, nothing upon which can be based what I venture to call the unworthy suggestion put forward that there is hidden in it somewhere the germ of unjust discrimination. But I repeat what I have already said: If any man suspects the existence of that defect, let him tell us how to remove it. The men who have made these suggestions are able, astute, capable men; surely they can find means to make more sure the purpose we have in mind. The suggestion to which I have referred, I say, is unworthy of the men who made it, not only because, in my judgment, there is nothing in the measure to justify it, but because they know that if they have a better suggestion, it will be acceptable, and because they know also that statements of that kind can have but one effect—to add to the already too-much inflamed condition of a public mind which is not yet thoroughly informed upon the imperative necessity of this measure, and more particularly not yet thoroughly informed upon what the putting into effect of the measure will mean throughout the country. I register my most emphatic protest against that sort of insinuation. It is unfair to us who stand behind the Bill—but that is a minor matter—it is the contribution of the hon. gentlemen who make it, to add to the already disturbed condition of public opinion.

Here is a measure that is far from being what it has been represented to be, viz.,

a measure of conscription which is going to take away man, woman and child. We have had pitiful descriptions of the husband snatched away from his wife and children, and of distressful conditions...at, it is said, will surround the enforcement of the measure. We want one hundred thousand men, and before any married man is asked to go under the terms of the Bill, we shall have exhausted the supply of men from twenty to thirty-five years of age who are unmarried and fit to go. I shall not go into figures which have been given already, but it would appear to be beyond peradventure that this married man, whose fate we have been asked to bemoan, will not be called upon under this measure; he will certainly not be called upon until every man of the class I have described has been called upon and has given his services. But the picture that has been drawn is really the picture of what has happened under the voluntary system. The man with a wife and young children, who, because he was of high heart and had a strong sense of duty, responded to the call that his heart and conscience put upon him, or yielded to the pressure of public opinion that necessarily existed under what we call the "voluntary" system, went under the distressing circumstances so pathetically enlarged upon. How many and many a father has left this country and gone over, to give his life in this great struggle, or to return crippled and unable to support that family; while men with no dependents, men of leisure, men with money, men who did not need to devote themselves to production, men without ties, with no one dependent upon them, sat at home—and, under the voluntary system, sat at home in the exercise of their absolute right. I say that this is a measure for the protection of the family; it is not a measure that threatens them with the dire consequences that have been spoken of.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

After Recess.

The House resumed at eight o'clock.

Hon. C. J. DOHERTY (Minister of Justice) (resuming): When the House rose I had been dealing with what I conceived to be the principle of the Bill, and I had endeavoured to make clear what some of its principal dispositions were. I had taken occasion to make some observations in regard to certain insinuations that some of

its dispositions revealed a desire to create or make possible discriminations in the administration of the Act. May I just add upon that subject one observation? Hon. gentlemen suggest that the measure, in some of its terms, makes discrimination possible and they impute to this Government therefore the intention to bring about that result. Do they quite realize that the first thing this Government did, after the Bill was drafted, was to make a proposition that hon. gentlemen from the other side should come into the Administration, displacing a number of those who are here now and that, unless they were going to be parties to the working out of this discrimination which they say the Government contemplated, it would be absolutely impossible. Could there be any more manifest evidence that there could have been no ulterior purpose at all events in the working of any of these dispositions than the readiness and willingness to confide their administration to the newly constituted government which would be equally representative of what is now the Opposition and what is now the party that happens to be in power and that would be not merely composed for one-half of it, of gentlemen who would be nominated by the present leader of the Opposition, but if my memory serves me aright, would be composed for the other half of gentlemen who would sit in that Government subject to the veto of the right hon. gentleman who represents the Opposition. Surely, at all events, we can claim that we have an absolute defence against this insinuation of some ulterior purpose hidden or—I do not know whether hon. gentlemen go so far as to say—apparent, on the face of this measure. Furthermore, this invitation, of suggestions to meet possible objections to any particular provision, or series of provisions, has been extended and certainly will be acted upon.

Before I pass to another phase, may I just, by way of transition, say one word upon the fact that certain hon. gentlemen have taken occasion of the discussion of this measure to refer to what they consider the numerous sins of omission and commission of this Administration. How can that bear upon the question we are called upon to deal with, the question of whether the method proposed is necessary and advisable and is the one which the conditions in which we find ourselves impose upon us the duty of adopting. Again, I point out that simultaneously with the presentation of this measure the Government

offered to disappear and allow it to be administered by a newly constituted Government composed in the manner which I indicated a few moments ago. Surely that makes it evident that we have just one question to deal with, and that we may pass without further observation from these objections, grievous as they may appear in the eyes of some hon. gentlemen and which have no bearing upon the question as to whether this measure should or should not be adopted.

Now, I pass to the consideration of another matter that calls certainly for an observation from me and which has arisen out of this debate. We have heard a great deal about pledges and promises. We have heard something about broken faith and we have listened to very eloquent denunciations of this Government whose pledged honour, hon. gentlemen say, has been violated. I think we even heard something about scraps of paper. I, in particular, had the pleasure of sitting here and hearing the hon. member for Rouville (Mr. Lemieux), the hon. member for Laval (Mr. Wilson) and the hon. member for Montcalm (Mr. Lafortune) to-day refer to a matter in regard to which I desire to say a word. The affirmation was made that description was a bad thing for Canada because of what the Minister of Justice had said to a very distinguished prelate in Montreal whose name I would not think of introducing into this discussion. It was alleged that I had said a thing which was not true. The hon. member for Rouville was delicate in his expression in that regard but I think he fairly conveyed that meaning. My hon. friend from Laval was less delicate. Before he got through with me he told this House that I had made all sorts of false representations to this reverend gentleman. Then, we go on up in a crescendo. The hon. member for Montcalm did not make any bones about it at all. I do not know whether he felt called upon to go one better than the hon. member for Laval but he did not hesitate to state that I had lied to the archbishop. As far as the pledges of this Government are concerned, it is not for me to deal with this subject. Hon. members have heard recited what have been described as the pledges of this Government. It takes a good deal of determination to find a case of broken promises, to read into the declarations which these hon. gentlemen have read, a promise of future action under all circumstances no matter what might happen. Is a Government never to be free to state what its actual policy is, never to be free to state that it has not

certain things in contemplation without being held to have bound itself that never in the future (no matter how conditions or circumstances may change, no matter what knowledge may come to it that it had not at the time that of statement of policy) would it take any course different from that which it was actually following and had then in contemplation. That is the proposition.

We hear about the bankrupt honour of this Government and about its broken pledges. I am told that I made all sorts of false representations, and that I lied to a very distinguished gentleman and a very valued friend of mine. I have adverted to the statements that were made on behalf of this Government. Let me say one word as to the statements which I made, wherein I am told to-day that I lied. In the first place, let me say that I would not dream of contradicting any statement made by the distinguished gentleman to whom I refer, as to what I said to him. I accept his statement as to that as unquestionably true, and I have no doubt that I conveyed to him the meaning which he now attaches to it. It looks as though the desire of the hon. gentleman was to put me in contradiction with this distinguished gentleman, who has my respect and veneration. I say with truth as well as with pride, that I count him among my most valued and respected friends, and if that be their desire, they certainly shall not succeed. I have no hesitation in saying that what I said was true at the time, and is just as true to-day. I said that the National Service cards had no connection, near or far, with conscription. I say that to-day, and it is true. Gentlemen have been through the province of Quebec who were so fond of talking conscription that one would almost believe that they sighed for the day when it might come, or, at all events, might be proposed, in order that they might use the fact to further their political advancement. These gentlemen had been making statements in Quebec, and I shall not say they lied. I have more consideration for the hon. gentleman from Montcalm (Mr. Lafortune) than apparently he has for me. They have been stating what perhaps they did not know to be false, but what they certainly did not know to be true, namely that the National Service cards were a step in the direction of conscription. I stated at the time that that was untrue, and I say to-night that it is untrue and I defy any body to establish the contrary. And because, forsooth, I told that truth, hon. gentlemen talk about my

having lied, and they talk about my broken faith and about all sorts of representations that I made. I expressed my absolute conviction, as a conviction and an opinion, that conscription would not come in this country, and I believed it absolutely. If the gentleman to whom that statement was made understood it to be a promise, and said that I made it, let it be well understood. I am not denying that what I said may have justified the view he took of it, though I venture to say nothing was further from my mind, at the moment, than that I was making a promise. Let it be clearly understood I made no such promise. Had I undertaken to make such a promise, hon. gentlemen would have a right to reproach me, not for the breaking but for the making of it. I recognize that that would be a grave offence. Mark you, I refer to a promise such as the one I am reproached for having broken, and such as the hon. leader of the Government is reproached for having failed to keep. I say that if any public man should undertake to promise that he would not adopt a certain course, no matter how clearly circumstances might make it his duty to adopt that course, he would be gravely to be condemned for making such a promise. And, when circumstances which he did not control made it his imperative duty, in the interests of his country, or brought home to his mind the conviction that it was his imperative duty in the interests of his country, to take the course that he had promised not to take, would hon. gentlemen contend that he should say, "Yes, it is quite clear now, the salvation of my country depends upon a certain course being taken, I am the man who is in a position to take it, I alone, can set on foot the measures to bring it about, but I made a promise, and I must stand by it, and see the honour of my country lost, and see the soldiers of my country left unsupported, and see possible defeat come to those to whom I have pledged my assistance, and see the cause that I thought of such importance as to justify my plunging my country into war go down to disgraceful defeat, because, forsooth, I rashly and unwisely made a promise?" I say, Mr. Speaker, that a man who, in those circumstances, would feel that he was withheld from doing that which was his clear duty, gravely as he had offended in making the rash promise, would offend more gravely by keeping it. I see my hon. friend from Montcalm smiling at me in a calm way. I put a case before him. I have heard people speak in the strongest way against the use

of firearms. I have heard men say that never, under any circumstances, or under any conditions, was a man justified in carrying a firearm, or in using it against his neighbour. Suppose a man, having made that declaration and pledge, finds himself in a situation where his house has been broken into by a powerful ruffian, who, perhaps, proceeded to outrage his wife and his daughter; the firearm lies right by his hand. Would the member for Montcalm say that the husband should fold his arms with the remark: oh, I made a promise; I shall not interfere?

Mr. LAFORTUNE: I never said that.

Mr. DOHERTY: The member for Montcalm—and the member for Rouville (Mr. Lemieux) also, if I may judge from what he said the other evening, with his hands in the air, about the "broken faith" of this Government—would stand behind that husband and say: beware, your broken faith, your broken faith! And he would expect that husband to drop his firearm and take no action. After the ruffian had carried out his operations to his own satisfaction, and this promiser, his house looted and his family murdered, was himself ready for the grave, I suppose the member for Rouville would conduct the victim there in admiration and would see to it that a monument was erected to his memory. I suppose he would inscribe upon that monument the words of the poet about a man who acted not dissimilarly: "Faith, unfaithful, made him falsely true."

I say again that I never made any promise. If it is said that I made such a promise, I am not questioning the statement of the gentleman who so understood my remarks. If I had made any such promise, I would have done a thing that I should not have done. If the circumstances be such as the Prime Minister says they are to-day on the other side of the water, and as I absolutely believe them to be; and if the reasons which I gave this afternoon prove that the only effective way of meeting these conditions is the adoption of this measure, then I say that had I made such a promise, my only course as a man of honour would have been to do that which my position here, the exigencies of the case and the needs of my country called upon me to do.

So much for pledges and promises. The member for Montcalm to-day gave great

credit to the ex-Secretary of State (Hon. E. I. Patenaude) for his action in leaving this Government. To what did the member for Montcalm attribute that action? He said that the former Secretary of State would rather leave this Government than be a party to the breaking of these pledges, and he expressed the wish that other gentlemen had felt likewise. I should like the member for Montcalm to remember the expression by which he qualified the statement that he attributed to me. As I do not like to get beyond Parliamentary rules, all I ask him to do is to take it that I am making a similar statement with regard to the statement of his; that the ex-Secretary of State left this Government rather than break his pledges. Did the member for Montcalm read the letter of the ex-Secretary of State? Does he still persist in saying that the reason he gave why the ex-Secretary of State left the Government is correct? I will not try to qualify his action if he does so; the member for Montcalm would have just the word to use—but I shall not use it.

Mr. LAFORTUNE: I have not a word to withdraw.

Mr. DOHERTY: That is exactly what I said.

Mr. LAFORTUNE: I have my Archbishop with me.

Mr. DOHERTY: I congratulate the hon. gentleman upon the company in which he says he finds himself, but I am not afraid that he will succeed in destroying the confidence of that gentleman in myself. The ex-Secretary of State did not leave this Government because he had made a pledge that he thought this Government was breaking. The member for Montcalm, who has waited so long to discover his innate admiration of the member for Hochelaga (Mr. Patenaude), certainly does not entertain a higher opinion of that gentleman than I do. It was a loss to the Government when Hon. Mr. Patenaude thought it his duty to withdraw from it, and it would be a great loss to the public life of Canada if he should permanently withdraw from it. I sincerely hope that wherever it may seem to him that the path of duty lies, he will continue to follow that path and to give his valuable service to our country. But the ex-Secretary of State knows precisely all the facts with which we have been dealing and I leave it to him whether there was any question of broken promise or broken

pledge on his part or on mine. Moreover, I leave it to his letter of resignation to contradict the unfounded statement of the member for Montcalm that he resigned rather than break a pledge that was given and that reproach should be addressed to me because I had not done likewise. Hon. gentlemen who appreciate what honour means should be careful not to impugn a man's personal honour as mine has been impugned by the member for Rouville—I give him the credit that his language was more delicate than that of the member for Laval (Mr. Wilson) and the member for Montcalm. This subject is not as important, from the public point of view, as these hon. gentlemen seem to think it is, but it is of vital importance to me, because it touches my personal honour. Let me advert for a moment to the use which the member for Laval did not think it beneath him to make of an answer given on behalf of the Government to a question put by the member for Russell (Mr. Murphy). I have not the slightest doubt that the member for Russell got an answer to the question that he intended to put. I know the member for Russell too well and have too high a respect for him to imagine that he would try, under the guise of a Parliamentary question, to pry into the private correspondence of a gentleman because he happened to be a member of the Government. The member for Russell asked whether there had been any correspondence between this Government, or any member of the Government, and any prelate of the province of Quebec.

We would not have done to the hon. member for Russell (Mr. Murphy) the injustice to suppose that he was trying to ferret out private correspondence between members of this Government and their friends. The hon. member for Russell is a gentleman, and I am quite sure he never meant to try to do anything of the kind. Such action would be beneath contempt. How it should be more justifiable to try to ferret out the correspondence between a gentleman, because he happens to be a member of the Government, and another gentleman, who happens to be a clergyman or a prelate or a bishop in the church to which that gentleman happens to belong, is something that I cannot understand. I want to be just, and I am only just to the hon. member for Russell when I say I am satisfied he had no such idea in mind, and equally am I satisfied that he never conceived of the use to which the hon. member for Laval (Mr. C. A. Wilson) would be willing to put the perfectly proper answer the hon. mem-

ber got, that there was no official correspondence by the Government, and that the Government did not charge itself with investigating the private correspondence of its members. The hon. member for Russell never can have foreseen the use that that answer would be put to. The hon. member for Laval, the other evening, in the presence of the hon. member for Rouville (Mr. Lemieux), who did not condemn his action—I am satisfied if he thinks about it, he will condemn it—proceeded in this House to find fault with this answer and, having satisfied himself from it that there was private correspondence, to draw this extraordinary conclusion: "there was private correspondence because the Government said there was no official correspondence—which was the only matter at issue—and moreover, it has been said that a minister made a promise to an archbishop; by this system of reasoning I have arrived at the conclusion that there was private correspondence between the minister and the archbishop; therefore, it is proved, as clear as day, that that minister made that particular promise to the archbishop." My hon. friend from Montcalm (Mr. Lafortune) smiles. He is an expert on proof, and I am satisfied that he is absolutely convinced that that is proven. The next time he wants to prove that I have announced my intention of setting fire to the Parliament buildings, it will be the simplest thing in the world for him to do so after this fashion; an hon. member will ask this Government: "Has there been any correspondence between any minister, say, and his wife with regard to the Parliament Buildings?" The Government will answer: "This Government has had no official correspondence with the lady, and it does not investigate correspondence between its members and their wives." There is, of course, nothing further to be said. It will be conclusively demonstrated to the hon. member for Montcalm and the hon. member for Laval, that I wrote to my wife a letter, in which I announced my intention of burning down the Parliament buildings. Was it worth while to try to make an utterly contemptible use of a fair answer to a fair question, for the purpose of arriving at that conclusive demonstration? So much for the pledges.

I wish to advert for a moment to the condition which, in our judgment, made it imperatively necessary to provide without delay an additional number of men. I desire to read to the House a paragraph from a

letter which came under my notice to-day. I do not know the writer beyond that he is apparently an American in the Ambulance Service writing home from France. His letter describes so accurately a condition of affairs that this House has had intimated to it by the Prime Minister in terms as clear as it would be becoming for a man occupying his position to use, that I venture to read it here. The writer says, as descriptive of the conditions on the French front to-day and as indicating the need for men:—

France has up to this time fought with a bravery unprecedented in the history of the world. Her men have sacrificed themselves with almost reckless abandon. Her losses have been tremendous. Now France is tired out, dead tired. Most of her young men have gone, and the older classes are being called out to fill their places; and this work is simply too much for men of advanced years. Then America enters the war. A new dawn appears to these old men. At last they can get back to their field, or go into some less strenuous back line work. At last there is a chance that some members of this wonderful nation will survive this war and continue this race which has stood for so much in art and literature. But what is America doing?

And then the writer goes on to criticise the action of America in sending ambulance corps which can be useful behind the lines and in not sending men to go into the front trenches. He goes on to say:—

If America wishes to see France stagger and fall from loss of blood; if she wants to go into the future with the stigma that she moved too late to save France, let her continue to send automobilists to joy ride along the French front and consume French food and fuel. If she wants the name of a fighting nation, let her send shiploads of aviators and planes and follow these with a backbone of artillery. Also let her provide some means by which her sons in France now serving as ambulancers or in other positions may get into some more warlike work and fight as good Americans should.

That is not addressed to us, but has it no message for us? After all, what is it more than the message that the great Maréchal Joffre, who, with very little English at his disposal, emphasized again and again to the soldiers in Montreal, as he passed them in review: "Send us more men; send us more men?" Did Maréchal Joffre know what was needed, or perchance does the hon. member for Montcalm (Mr. Lafortune) know better? That is the situation over there. It is only another man's expression of what we all knew, but it describes the situation very aptly, and, I have not the slightest doubt, very correctly. The Prime Minister, in terms fitting for him to use, has told this House of the crying need for men. Perhaps some of us have heard the story

more in detail. Perhaps some of us have heard things that it might not be wise to give to the public. Perhaps some of us have a more keen sense of the critical nature of the present situation than the people of Canada, before the visit of the Prime Minister to England, had conceived. I am no pessimist; I have no desire to create unnecessary alarm; I have no desire to say anything that would create the impression that conditions were more desperate than they are.

But I do venture to say that to my mind—I give this, of course, for what it is worth as my own conviction—this war to-day is anybody's war. I do not say that I have no longer confident hope; I have, but that confident hope rests upon everybody who is in this war doing his utmost. We have been told: Oh, the United States has come into the war. That is given as a reason why we should let up. I have a great admiration for our friends of the United States. I have faith in their bravery, faith in their resources, faith that they will do their utmost. But when they have done their utmost they will be proud men if, by doing that utmost, they shall have placed themselves in a position to equal the great effort that France has made, but which, alas, she can make no longer, or at all events with the same effect. Is it consonant with the honour of Canada to say, as we have heard it said here: Oh, it is not our 100,000 men who are going to make the difference. But our 100,000 men are, in proportion to our population and means, what ten times that number would be to the people of the United States. If the people of the United States say: Oh, it is not our 1,000,000 men who are going to make the difference, and if Great Britain lets up and says: Oh, it is not the more men that we may gather who are going to make the difference—if we and the United States and Great Britain say that, all the difference in the world will result. Surely we have pride enough to say: Having put our hand to the plough, we will not look back at this critical moment. Surely we have regard enough for our young men who have gone forth so willingly and so readily to say to them: So far as it depends upon us at home, your task will not be made harder than it need be.

Do hon. gentlemen realize what reinforcements mean? Do they realize that when reinforcements are lacking, double or treble stress is put on the man at the front? You are exposing him to double or treble

danger; you are sending him again and again into the trenches to meet death. In addition to that, when he has done his double or treble duty, he gets but half or one-third the time for rest he would get if his comrades at home were doing their duty. When it is for this purpose that reinforcements are needed, are we going to sit back and say: Oh, well, let the Americans do it; let the Englishmen do it; let the Frenchmen in the present exhausted condition of France do it; we have no interest in our boys more than we have in any other men who are fighting in this war. I did not intend to go into any development of the reasons why this thing ought to be done, because that has already been treated of very much more eloquently than I could hope to do it, but there are some things a man cannot touch without being carried away.

Now to proceed to the suggested referendum, which is the method proposed for meeting the emergency, for remedying the condition of which I have spoken. Mr. Speaker, no man is a greater stickler for the people's rights than, I venture to say, I am. There is to me, as a representative of the people, only one thing more sacred than the people's rights, and that is the people's duty. To the individual man, his duty is or ought to be something much more sacred than his right. The public man ought to be more anxious about whether he is doing his duty as a public man than whether he is doing just absolutely to the line what he has a right to do. I am anxious that the people's rights should be respected, but I am also anxious for the honour of my country that the people's duties should be done. It is all very well to talk of devotion to the people, and I suppose that there are occasions when that talk is useful for getting votes, but there comes a time—or all government is vain imagining—when it is the duty of the people's representatives and of those who have been entrusted with the government of the people, to see to it that the people do their duty. And, that is the position that confronts this Parliament to-night. Let me eliminate for a moment the question which I shall deal with later on of whether there is any distinction between this Parliament and any other Parliament. Is it my right hon. friend's (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) conception of popular or democratic government that those whom the people elect and to whom they entrust the power of governing them, and with the

power the duty of exercising it, shall never govern the people when the people do not want to do their duty. I am not saying that the people of Canada do not now want to do their duty, but the principle that underlies this referendum motion is that if the time ever comes when the people of Canada do not want to do their duty, those entrusted with the government shall throw up their hands and say: We will not govern, we will go out and say to the people—on the hypothesis that they do not want to do their duty—please will you be good enough to tell us whether we, your delegated authority to govern you, ought to make a law to compel you to do your duty. When I studied mathematics long ago there was one form of argument described as the *reductio ad absurdum*. When you wanted to show that a proposition was absolutely indefensible you pointed out the absurdity of the consequences to which it would lead. It seems to me that the referendum proposal is intended to support an argument directed against democratic government to show its utter futility and utter uselessness by means of the *reductio ad absurdum*. If that is not reducing to the absurd the consequences of government by the people, then I have no comprehension of what the absurd means.

Let us understand each other about government by the people. Under our constitution we have government by the people in this sense: that it belongs absolutely to the people, to determine who shall govern them. But it is a novel proposition that government by the people necessarily involves enactment of legislation by the people themselves, and that is in practical effect what is suggested by this referendum. There may be circumstances when it is proper to do that. But now, when the whole question involved is not, mind you, whether the people ought to do a duty, but whether there ought to be a law enacted to compel them to do that duty, it is proposed that we should go out and ask the people, who do not want to be compelled, if they want to be compelled. Surely, if the people want to be compelled it is the clearest evidence that they do not need to be compelled; for if they do want to be compelled they will go out and do the duty without compulsion. So, when you ask the question, you must assume that they do not want to do the duty. Therefore, the proposal is that we should go out and say to them: Gentlemen, you do not want to go to the war; will you be good enough to tell us if you want us to make a law to com-

pel you to go to the war you do not want to go to? What answer is expected, I do not know.

It may be said that it is the majority of the people who would determine that question; and I quite understand that a large part of the majority will not be liable or not unwilling to go to the war. Their votes will compel the liable but unwilling, and what I am suggesting is not true as an absolute proposition governing the whole of the people. But it remains true that in the majority, whichever way it votes—and certainly in the majority if you have a majority saying they do not want a law to compel those who do not want to go to the war to go—you will have the vote of every man who does not want to go to the war; you will have the vote of every man who, if any body ought to be compelled, is the man who ought to be compelled to go to the war. And you are told that this is a necessary consequence of democratic institutions. If I were called upon to make an attack upon government by the democracy, I do not think I could find a stronger argument than to point to that as one of its necessary consequences.

We are asked to trust the people. Mr. Speaker, I trust the people; I trust the people far and beyond where many hon. gentlemen on the other side trust them. I trust them miles beyond where my hon. friend from Montcalm trusts them. He gave us a pathetic description of the efforts that would have to be made to enforce this law and of the ways that people would find to evade it. And I must pay him—I wonder if it is safe to call it the compliment—of saying that he gave us some of the most original law it has ever been my fortune to listen to. There are many things in which originality is a very good quality. I do not want to discuss at the moment how far originality in law is a good quality; but I give the hon. gentleman credit for producing some most original law. He has laboured to show how easy it is for the people of Canada—who, of course, according to him, do not want to obey the law—to evade the law. I trust the people more than he does. I trust the people that, after this law shall have been enacted, and when they understand and know just what it is and just how it operates, they will recognize it as the proper method of providing both that those who should not go to the war shall be exempt from pressure to go, and that those who should go shall come forward to do their duty. I have not the apprehension the hon. gentleman has expressed, for

I trust the people. I trust to their mature judgment; I trust them when they shall have had time to reflect. But

9 p.m. the suggestion is that we do not trust the people because we will not take their judgment at the first moment when a proposition of this kind is made to them, when they are unprepared for it, ill-informed or mis-informed upon it. Reproaches have been cast upon the Government in this matter, I am not concerned about that, because I think we have come to the day when the personal reproach that an individual may earn, and the question whether a particular Government is deserving of condemnation or the contrary, or whether a particular party has always been on right lines, or the contrary, are matters of absolutely no consequence. I am quite satisfied that the people of Canada are not in the remotest degree interested to-day in the past sins or past virtues of the existing Government or of the present party to which I have the honour to belong, nor in those of the party of hon. gentlemen opposite. Whether the people of Canada are for this measure or against it, there is one thing I am absolutely convinced of, and that is that they have not the slightest interest in the discussion of the merits of political parties at this moment.

I was about to say, when I was carried into this digression, that I am prepared to trust the people, to trust the sane judgment of the people; to trust the judgment of the people after they have had proper opportunities for information. But to-day we are dealing with a people upon whom this proposition has come unexpectedly, and they are not prepared for it. I think that members of Parliament should be guided by the opinions of the people, but by the opinions of the people arrived at and formed after opportunity for consideration, and expressed at the proper time and in the proper manner under the provisions of the constitution. The hon. member for Montcalm took us nearly all over the province of Quebec, and told us of meetings that he had attended that were against conscription, including one in my own constituency. He further warned us that it would not be safe for us to go there and say a word for conscription, because the Lachine canal is near. Well, let me tell the hon. member in turn that, when he wants to make the statement that I lied, it would not be wise for him to go back and make it in St. Anne's hall, even at a Liberal meeting, because the Lachine canal is very near.

Now, I was saying, I trust the people. I trust implicitly to their judgment when they have had opportunity for information and consideration. But I do not conceive the functions of a representative of the people to be to go around to meetings throughout the country addressing people who have not the necessary information, stirring them up to express an opinion in a certain sense, and then walk into this House and say: There is nothing more to be said; I am here to express the opinions of the people. The question what the function of a member of Parliament is under the British system is not a new question. I am not going into that question, but I would suggest to these hon. gentlemen who are so anxious about the opinion of the people that they should take a few minutes some day to read a famous speech of that great English statesman—I should rather say, that great Irishman whom Ireland gave to England to be one of her greatest statesmen—Edmund Burke. That will tell them what is the proper position of a representative of the people. Let me read a few lines. Burke was being reproached for not having followed the opinion of his electors—the subject is not material. He said to them:

For, gentlemen, it is not your fond desires, nor mine, that can alter the nature of things; by contending against which, what have we got, or ever shall get, but defeat and shame? I did not obey your instructions. No; I conformed to the instructions of truth and nature, and maintained your interest, against your opinions, with a constancy that became me. A representative worthy of you ought to be a person of stability. I am to look, indeed, to your opinions; but to such opinions as you and I must have five years hence. I was not to look to the flash of the day.

We owe a duty to the people and that is not to look to the flash of the day, not to be governed by the opinions of people described by the hon. gentleman as being in a frame of mind where they throw one into the canal if he express any opinion other than what they may happen to entertain at the moment. Speaking for myself, and having respect for the people who were at these meetings, I can quite understand that at the first flash this proposal, ill-understood and worse explained, does not commend itself to their judgment but when it is brought to their attention and properly explained I am satisfied they will give it their approval. I am satisfied that if, by any mistake on the part of this Government and Parliament, we should decide to let this question be settled at this moment by a vote taken without further preparation, upon the submission of this sole ques-

tion to the people when they are being appealed to in the most powerful way and by the most eloquent gentlemen to resist and reject this proposal, that if we should subject the honour of Canada to being soiled by the possibly unfortunate result of a vote taken under these circumstances by the people ill-informed and without proper explanation, these very people themselves, when they saw the result, would never forgive us for what we had done. They would tell us, in the words of Edmund Burke: You should not have been governed by the flash of the moment; you should have waited for our opinion one year, two years or three years hence when we shall be in a position to appreciate the possible results; perhaps even to know the actual results of the decision you are called upon to make.

Now, I feel that I owe the House and yourself, Mr. Speaker, an apology for the length at which I have allowed myself to be led into going in connection with this most important question. I do not know that I can flatter myself that what I have said can alter the views of any man but at least I feel that the best thought that I have been able to give to the most important question that I have ever had to consider has inspired me to say what I have said. In conclusion, let me just say one word as to what has been called the constitutional lack of power of this Parliament to pass this Bill and the absence of a mandate on the part of its members. I wonder if hon. members remember what happened in January, 1916, and I wonder if their memory goes a little farther back to August, 1914. In August, 1914, nobody could question the mandate of this Parliament and nobody could speak of this Government as being moribund. I do not feel quite so shocked about that expression as the hon. member for Montcalm thought I ought to. The best of us, even my hon. friend from Montcalm himself, will come some day to be in a moribund condition and still he marvels that we do not rise in wrath at the very mention of it. I do not know what we are expected to do or to say when we are described as a moribund Government as we have been by the leader of the Opposition. Well, we have to stand that epithet. Could this Government be described as a moribund Government in 1914? Had this Parliament a mandate in 1914? What did this Parliament do in 1914? We had a three or four days' session. I think we all look back with pride and pleasure to those three or four days because in that three or four

days' session we realized to the full the condition which the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Maclean) the other day recalled to us as having been described by an English poet in words put into the mouth of a Roman of old lamenting the disappearance of those days "when none were for a party and all were for the State." In those four or five days we realized that. I hope that we will still, notwithstanding the difference of opinion that exists between us as to this particular measure, be in that frame of mind. There could be no doubt about it at that time and what did this Parliament, then in the full enjoyment of its mandate, under the impulse of that common sentiment, realize? Was it wondering about the rights of the people, was it wondering whether it should have a referendum, was it anxious even about the rights of the people's representatives? Not a bit. This Parliament did at that time, and under the inspiration of the impulse that prevailed then, something that was absolutely unprecedented in the annals of Canadian Parliaments and, I am not quite sure whether one could not safely say, in the annals of any British Parliament. Parliament then handed over to this Government, that was not moribund then, absolutely its entire legislative powers in so far as matters pertaining to the war were concerned. Conditions were so critical that the people's representatives were willing to forego their control over legislation and to hand it over to the Government, a Government that had not been elected to deal with these matters in particular. Parliament then realized that what would be necessary would be prompt action and it thought it was worth while to sacrifice even the right of the people to make their own legislation through their own representatives in order to ensure that needed action would be taken at the proper moment and that there should be no delay. That is what Parliament did then, a live Parliament, a Parliament that had an unquestioned mandate. I am not going to claim now that the Government might do what it chose. I think it might have done what it believed to be right, but this Government, in carrying out its duty, has been truly conservative in the exercise of its powers. But, I have referred to their wide scope as indicating what this Parliament in the vigour of its life, when its mandate was undoubted and its motives of the highest, thought it proper to do on behalf of the people. It was absolutely like the action that the earliest democratic peoples realized, in very ancient times, to be the proper action in like conditions. We all know that

when the State was in peril, when the enemy was at the gate, when civil commotion threatened, in the old Rome of the Republican days, the people, ever jealous of their rights, stood not upon them, and the Senate said to the consuls: Take care that nothing of evil befall the Commonwealth. *Caveant consules ne quid detrimenti Republica capiat,*" and left to them the plenitude of power.

And in virtue of what Parliament did then, in the full vigour of its life and unquestioned mandate, I venture to say the Government might have proceeded upon the authority so conferred to enact the present measure. We have not sought to do so, nor would we dream of going that far. I refer to the legislation merely to show what this Parliament thought was the proper line of action in the day of its fullest vigour. In 1916 what did this Parliament do? Parliament voted that it was desirable that though, under our written constitution our mandate expired in October last, the mandate of Parliament should be extended for another year, and to-day the hon. gentlemen who supported that motion, who felt that the good of the country imperatively demanded such action, now say one after the other, "Oh, we did something we had not any right to do; although we did it with our eyes open, we had no right to do it, and therefore we do not now represent the people." I was amazed to hear members make speeches in this Chamber on the strength of the fact that they did not represent the people. I desire to say one word with reference to that proposition.

It is quite true that, under our written constitution, this House was elected for a fixed period of five years. But the constitution of this country is susceptible of amendment, and the people may express their will tacitly, just as clearly as by their vote, and when, in 1916, this Parliament, composed of representatives about whose mandate there was no doubt, gentlemen who represented the entire country, unanimously said that the safety of the country required that there should be no election, but that the life of Parliament should be extended, and when the people of Canada from one end to the other ratified that decision, I say, Mr. Speaker, that we then modified the constitution in the most regular and normal British way, that is by what is done and accepted as being the needful thing to meet new and unprovided for conditions. It is true we have a written

constitution, and it can legally be altered only by the Imperial Parliament. The Imperial Parliament sanctioned the Bill passed in 1916, and that rendered legal what had been decided upon by us. I can say that when the Parliament, under those conditions, and with the absolute ratification of the people—and I am satisfied that will not be disputed—passed the Bill extending the life of Parliament in January, 1916, a Parliament was constituted with all the powers that ever belonged to any Parliament in the Dominion of Canada. Our right to sit as a Parliament was questioned by the hon. gentleman from Montcalm (Mr. Lafortune) as being illegal. That is part of the original law that the hon. gentleman gave us this afternoon, but when it is said our existence is unconstitutional I can only say that while this Parliament is not here by the will of the people, expressed in the ordinary and usual form, it is here by the unmistakable assent of the people, who were convinced that the expression of their will in the usual form would be detrimental to the best interest of Canada. I, for one, have no doubt of the validity of my mandate, nor have I any doubt of your powers, Mr. Speaker, in this House. We can do anything and everything that a lawfully and constitutionally elected Parliament can do, and, therefore, I have no doubt of my right to sit here and perform my duties as a member of Parliament. I have already endeavoured to point out Canada's duty at the present time, which is quite clear. Here we have in our hands the mandate, and on our shoulders

the responsibility, for seeing that Canada does her duty. Mr. Speaker, I for one—and I am satisfied the great majority of the members of this House will be with me—will not shirk this responsibility to-night upon the mere plea of undue anxiety about the rights of the people.

In conclusion, to go back to where I began, let me suggest that we all endeavour, in the decision to which we may come, and the action we may take in pursuance of that decision, to join together, with the realizing sense that there is but one question in reality before us, and that is: What is the duty of Canada to-night? What is her duty to herself, to her honour, to her Allies, to her voluntary soldiers who have died, and are dying and facing death to-night? Let us forget that there are different provinces. Let us forget all the reproaches one race may think it has to make against another. Let us forget all the petty quarrels which may have occurred between us, by reason of political divergence, or differences. Let us forget that there are any political parties. Let us forget that there are any Government or any Opposition. Let us remember just one thing alone; that there is come to us the great privilege, carrying with it the heavy burden of responsibility, of determining for Canada to-night the most important question that any Canadian Parliament has ever been called upon to determine, a question upon whose right decision, and upon the proper action following that decision depends the honour of our country, Canada.