

*Why
Conscription
is
Necessary*



**VOLUNTARY ENLISTMENT
IS FURNISHING BARELY
HALF ENOUGH MEN TO
REPLACE WASTAGE AT
THE FRONT.**

AC 901

A 7

1917

C. 2



National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Why Conscription is Necessary

10052

Unofficial figures are being used by opponents of Military Service to show that recruiting is heavy enough to meet the wastage in the Canadian Army, and, second, that the Canadian reserve forces overseas are still sufficient to supply all needed reinforcements for the Canadian army of four divisions at the front. The facts are just the contrary. *Recruiting from January to October 31 was barely half the wastage due to casualties and discharges.* As for the present reinforcements in England and Canada, they are rapidly dwindling, and unless there is aid sent immediately from Canada it will not be long until the number of Canadian divisions will have to be reduced. The military authorities estimate that by next April or May the last of the present infantry reserves will be exhausted, and unless there are reinforcements ready by then the heroic Canadian Army at the front will have to be reduced in size.

Of the enlistments this year, barely one-third was infantry, the total, according to the official figures, being only 20,533. There was also recruited for other branches, largely non-combatant, 34,984. The larger part of the recruits were for non-combatant services, while it is infantry men which are sorely needed and will be provided under the Military Service Act.

WASTAGE DOUBLE OF RECRUITS.

During the same period the Canadian casualties totalled 36,671, and there was discharged for innumerable reasons, largely sickness, from the force in Canada and England during the same period 52,052 men or a total wastage of 108,723, or nearly double of the number of recruits. *The total net loss to the Canadian Expeditionary force during this period was 53,206 men.* The official figures show that of the casualties, slightly under ninety per cent. were infantry, or, during the ten months the infantry casualties alone, aside from the discharges, were over 45,000, while the total infantry enlistments were only 20,533.

THE WASTAGE BY MONTHS.

The total wastage by months was as follows:—

January	4,396
February	21,955
March	6,161
April	16,894
May	13,247
June	7,913
July	7,906
August	13,232
September	10,990
October	5,920
Total	108,723

THE RECRUITING BY MONTHS.

The infantry recruiting by months was as follows:—

January	5,707
February	2,356
March	2,286
April	1,794
May	1,208
June	1,595
July	1,419
August	1,064
September	1,232
October	1,750
Total	20,506

Returning to the question of the present available reinforcements. The troops in England consist of the Fifth Division, now rapidly disappearing, men in hospitals, administrative troops and reserve units of the four divisions in France.

THE FIFTH CANADIAN DIVISION.

The Fifth Division was organized with the hope of increasing the Canadian Army at the front to five divisions, and the formation was fully organized ready to take its place in France. A sudden heavy call for men came, and the Fifth Division, having trained infantrymen ready, had to furnish the reinforcements from its infantry establishment. Before the Battle of Passchendaele the Fifth Division had been reduced to 12,000 or 13,000 men, of which only 10,000 were infantry. The artillery was able to go to France in a body. *The history of the Fifth Division is a clear example of the*

1917
(500)

failure of the volunteering system. There were more gunners than were needed and not sufficient foot soldiers. Thus was frustrated a project of increasing our forces at the front.

The number in hospitals vary from time to time, but recently on a certain day numbered 15,000 men. There is a constant flow of wounded men back and forth. Some are nursed back to health and return to France and others are sent back home.

The administrative services absorb some 15,000 to 16,000 men. Of these not far short of 10,000 are men who are physically unfit for service at the front, and are being used in various capacities—in training recruits, in hospital work, in the forwarding of supplies and stores, etc. Only some 4,000 are physically fit for general service.

RESERVE UNITS.

This leaves to be noticed the category of reserve units. The general plan is to have in England a reserve or depot corps for each corps in France. For example, the Central Ontario Regiment has a fighting battalion in one of the Divisions at the front; in England there is a corresponding Central Ontario Reserve Battalion, and the recruits, or recovered wounded, who are serving and training in it know that when they are needed in France they will, normally, go to their Central Ontario fighting battalion; they thus are interested while in England in the performances and fame of their destined corps. In these reserve units of infantry rank and file, there were a while ago not far short of 40,000; but of these rather fewer than 22,000 were available as infantry reinforcements; the remainder were not available, some because they were not physically fit, others because their training was not complete. In the other arms and services—cavalry, artillery, engineers, medical corps, army service corps, forestry corps, railway troops, etc.—there were more than 25,000; of these, some 15,000 or 16,000 were fit and could be used; but not as infantry. Of the remainder, some were physically unfit, some had not completed their training. Thus there are in sight rather more of the other arms and services than will be needed for some months, and an uncomfortably small number of that invaluable and most necessary article, the Canadian infantryman.

Coming to Canada it may be stated that in round figures there are some 20,000 officers and men of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, of whom only 6,000 to 8,000 are infantry. Here we see the weakness to remedy which the Military Service Act was needed. *The infantry recruits in Canada are fewer than the month's*

losses in the Canadian infantry in France. Every month a certain number of thousands of infantry recruits must leave the reserve battalions in England to go to France; every month a smaller number comes to these battalions from Canada; as the reservoir in England becomes smaller; and so we must contemplate, *either the disappearance of the reserves in England, or the procuring in Canada of a greater number of recruits.*

THE SYSTEM PROPOSED.

It is proposed to extend to Canada the system of corresponding reserve battalions which exists in England. The Canadian Infantry is divided into a certain number of Territorial Reserve, each of several battalions. Each Territorial Reserve will have one or more fighting battalions in France in one or other of the four divisions. Each will have a certain number of reserve or training battalions in England. Each will have its recruiting or depot battalion in Canada. A given recruit lives, let us say, in Central Ontario; he joins the Central Ontario Depot or recruiting battalion and gets his preliminary training in it. From his first day he is of the Central Ontario Regiment, and is taught to feel that he is one of an historic regiment, that one battalion of his Regiment fought at the second Ypres, another at the Somme, and so forth. When he crosses the sea, instead of the old heart-breaking experience of breaking up his battalion, or losing all his battalion pride, of forming a new regimental loyalty, he will find himself simply in another battalion of his home regiment, with neighbors serving in it; when he goes to France it will be to join the front line battalions of what has been his own regiment from the beginning; and when in future years in his Central Ontario home he as a veteran of the great war tells his children of his soldiering from first to last it will be of the Old Regiment that was raised in the very town in which those children live. Such is the idea at which the present measures of re-organization aim.

WHAT FOUR DIVISIONS COMPRISE.

Speaking in general figures, the four Canadian Divisions, alone, apart from all other troops, comprise, when up to their establishment, about 75,000 men. Including pioneers, there are 56 battalions of infantry or some 35,000 men; there are more than 10,000 artillery, from 3,000 to 4,000 engineers, some 3,000 medical troops, perhaps 2,000 Army Service Corps, and other troops making about 20,000 troops of other arms than the infantry. The Cavalry Brigade has

an establishment of some 3,000. So that the troops which we ordinarily think of in connection with our Canadian Army, the four Divisions and the Cavalry force, mean something a little short of 80,000 troops.

But this is only one item in the total. Sir Arthur Currie has at his disposal a mass of Corps troops; and also a great number of troops used on and for the lines of communication. The fighting corps troops amount to some 11,000 more; the bulk of those troops are artillery, some 5,000 or 6,000 strong—siege artillery, air-craft artillery, trench mortars, corps field artillery troops for maintaining the supply of ammunition, etc. There are over 2,000 engineers, tunnellers, telegraphers, telephonists, etc. More than 3,000 men are found by machine gunners and cyclists.

All told, Sir Arthur Currie's strictly fighting troops have establishments of some 90,000 men.

As for the lines of communication, they absorb not far short of 40,000 more. Army service corps and hospital services account for more than 8,000. The forestry service, railway troops and labour corps in France number more than 28,000, and it should be added that these formations render extremely valuable services. The railway troops, for example, have revolutionized conditions of supply and transport, have been the means of great saving of life in the rearward services, and by bringing up huge quantities of munitions have enabled the British Army to repeat its attacks at ever decreasing intervals.

CANADIAN TROOPS IN FRANCE.

Thus the Canadian troops now in France, if up to establishment, mean a force of approximately the following numbers:—

The Four Divisions and the Cavalry Brigade.....	78,000	
Fighting corps troops.....	11,000	
		89,000
Total fighting troops.....		89,000
Army Service Corps and Medical Services.....	8,000	
Railway, Forestry, Labour, etc., services.....	28,000	
		36,000
Total lines of communication.....		36,000
Grand total.....		125,000

This is not a statement of actual numbers in the field. Regiments may not be up to their establishments; and, in addition, there may be in France at some given moment a considerable number of recruits who have been brought over from England and are either being given their final training or are waiting to be moved up to the corps for which they are destined.

These several sorts of troops are exposed to varying degrees of danger; still, of all arms, the infantry stands most in need of reinforcements. As ever, it remains the Queen of Battles, and pays for its honour with its blood. In some respects it is less attractive than other services—the actual labour involved in marching, for example, is severe—and under the voluntary system, especially in its later phases, there was a tendency for other services to get rather more recruits than were needed to fill vacancies, and for the infantry to obtain fewer than were needed.

the Union Government Publicity Bureau, Ottawa, Canada.

Windle Printing Company, Limited, Montreal, Canada.