

"Canada will Answer the Call"

Sir Robert Borden's
Inspiring War-Message
to the Canadian People



Speech delivered at
Toronto, Dec. 5th,
—1914—

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On December 5, at a luncheon given jointly by the Canadian and Empire Clubs of Toronto, Sir Robert Borden, Prime Minister, delivered the following inspiring address, to be followed two days later by a similar address in the city of Montreal. Sir Robert's inspiring words were heralded immediately from coast to coast, and gave a remarkable impetus to the wave of patriotism sweeping over the Dominion in recruiting for the second contingent. Both in England and in the United States the speech was also widely quoted, and described as the most notable utterance emanating from Ottawa since the war began.

Sir Robert's Speech.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—

"Today there is but one thought in our hearts, and it is fitting that I should speak to you of the appalling struggle which has been forced upon our Empire. I say forced upon us, because I am convinced that no nation ever desired peace more sincerely than the nations which compose the British Empire; that no statesmen ever wrought more to avoid war than did the statesmen of Great Britain in the weeks which immediately preceded the conflict.

"There is not time, nor is it necessary that I should dwell upon the occurrence which determined the issue. The great events which brought about the establishment and consolidation of the German Empire—under Prussian domination—are well known to you. Bismarck foreshadowed in a famous phrase the policy of the future. "The great questions are to be settled," he said in 1862, "not by speeches and majority resolutions, but by blood and iron." Then came, in quick succession, the war against Denmark in 1864, the downfall of Austria in 1866, and the overthrow of France in 1870. The policy of blood and iron seemed to consummate the realization of that which has been the dream of Germany for centuries. Germany became an Empire; the King of Prussia became its Emperor. The military spirit of Prussia dominated German thought and German ideals. The intoxication of victory aided by a propaganda preached to every child and every young man by the foremost thinkers of Germany imposed on its people an ideal and an ambition which included the dominance of Europe, and, indeed, of the world.

Insidious Teaching of the War Advocates.

"The world has only recently come to realize the astonishing teaching to which the German people have listened for the last half century. Among many others, Treitschke, a great professor of history, whose influence upon the young

men of Germany cannot be over-estimated, and Bernhardi, his disciple, have preached the religion of valour and of might. War has been glorified as a solemn duty for the cause of national development. They proclaimed that the State is not only justified, but bound to put aside all obligations and to disregard all treaties insofar as they may conflict with its highest interest.

"War," said Bernhardi, "is in itself a good thing. It is a biological necessity of the first importance... "War is the greatest factor in the furtherance of culture and power; efforts to secure peace are extraordinarily detrimental as soon as they influence politics.... Efforts directed toward the abolition of war are not only foolish, but absolutely immoral, and must be stigmatized as unworthy of the human race.... "Courts of arbitration are a pernicious delusion. The whole idea represents a presumptuous encroachment on natural laws of development which can only lead to the most disastrous consequences for humanity generally.... The maintenance of peace never can be or may be the goal of a policy.... "Efforts for peace would, if they attained their goal, lead to degeneration.... Huge armaments are in themselves desirable. They are the most necessary precondition of our national health."

Germany Has Long Been a World-menace.

"The profound influence of this teaching upon the German people may be realized from their unquestioning support of the enormous increase in their military and naval forces. Beyond question Germany is the greatest military power in the world. Without any such need as makes a great fleet imperatively necessary to ensure the safety and even the existence of the British Empire, she has built up in ships, personnel, dockyards and all other essentials a powerful navy de-

signed to challenge conclusions with that of Great Britain. What ambitions would not be open to Germany, what tribute could she not exact, if dominating Europe with her army she could wage a successful naval campaign against Britain.

"Within the past ten years the peace of Europe has been threatened by Germany on no less than three occasions. In 1905 France, at her dictation, was obliged to dismiss her Foreign Minister. In 1909 Germany shook her mailed fist and compelled Russia to bow to her will. In 1911, as the history of the Agadir incident recalls, she again attempted to coerce and humiliate France, and the situation was saved only by the interposition of Great Britain. Germany receded on that occasion from her first pretensions, but only to abide her time, which came in 1914.

Canada's Offer Made Before War Was Declared.

"The military autocracy of Germany have taught their people for more than twenty years that the British Empire stood chiefly in the path of German expansion, and that war was inevitable. No one could predict the exact occasion which would be seized, but no one could doubt the intention of the Prussian militarists. There was the lesson of Denmark and Austria and France. In the end the storm broke suddenly, and the country was confronted with responsibilities greater than those which it had ever faced. The situation demanded action; it demanded immediate and unhesitating action beyond the authorization of the law as it then stood; it was impossible for the Government to wait, and by Order-in-Council we promulgated necessary measures in advance of the meeting of Parliament. The people of Canada loyally acquiesced in these measures, and our course has been ratified by the necessary legislative sanction. On the first of August I sent to the British Government a secret telegram announcing Canada's desire to send an expeditionary force if war should ensue. The offer was not accepted until the 6th of August, but in the meantime steps in anticipation were taken and the raising and equipment of

troops for such a force was authorized. On the 7th of August the suggested composition of the force was received from the British authorities, and was immediately sanctioned by Order-in-Council.

Valcartier Camp a Great Achievement.

Recruiting in the meantime had already commenced, and on the 6th of August the preparation of the Valcartier Camp was begun. I visited that camp four weeks from the day on which work commenced, and I am proud that we possess in Canada the ability to achieve within so limited a period all that was accomplished within that month. A rifle range comprising a line of 1,500 targets and extending more than three and a half miles was completed within about ten days. A complete water supply, with necessary piping, pumps, tanks and chlorinating plant, with about 200 taps fitted to ablation tables and seventy-five shower baths was constructed. An electric light, power and telephone system was installed. Streets were constructed, buildings and tents erected, and an effective sewerage system comprising over 28,000 feet of drain pipe was completed. Railway sidings, with necessary loading platforms, were constructed. Woods were cleared and elaborate sanitary arrangements prepared. Six large buildings for ordnance stores and for the Army Service Corps, buildings for medical stores, for pay and transport offices, hospital stables for sick horses, fumigating and other buildings were constructed and made ready for use within the same period. Thirty-five thousand men were assembled and put through a most systematic course of training in all branches of the service. Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, Engineers, Army Service Corps, Army Medical Corps, Signallers and Ammunition columns were organized, and all were trained in their respective duties. Sixteen thousand men were trained daily in musketry. The clothing and equipment, the transport and supply for 35,000 men were a heavy undertaking, especially in the urgency of haste. It is difficult for those who did not see the camp and who have not studied all that

has been accomplished to realize the tremendous demands made upon the organizing ability of the Canadian people to accomplish all this.

Tremendous Work of Organization.

I venture the assertion that the organization and arrangements of Valcartier Camp have not been excelled in any part of our Empire since the commencement of this war. It is unnecessary to describe in detail all the equipment, arms, accoutrements and other necessaries furnished. To equip the force sent forward and to make some provision for future contingents 290,000 pairs of boots and shoes have been provided; 100,000 forage caps, 90,000 great coats, 240,000 jackets and sweaters of various types, 235,000 pairs of trousers, 70,000 rifles, 70,000 bayonets, 80,000 oil bottles, 70,000 water bottles, 95,000 sets of valise equipment, and so on in like proportion over a list of sixty-six different articles. With the first expeditionary force we sent to Great Britain 21 thirteen-pounder quick-firing guns, 96 eighteen-pounder quick-firing guns, 10 breach-loading sixty pounder guns, a large number of machine guns, motor lorries, transport wagons and vast quantities of ammunition. The force was ready for embarkation within six weeks from the outbreak of war, and could have been then despatched if arrangements for escort had been immediately possible. You, perhaps, do not realize how great an undertaking it was for a non-military country to assemble, organize, train, equip and despatch so large a force within that brief period. It is, I believe, the largest military force that ever crossed the Atlantic at one time. In the great Armada, which threatened the shores of Great Britain three centuries ago, there were less than 20,000 soldiers. The force which we have sent across the Atlantic is nearly fifty per cent. greater than the total number of British troops under Wellington's command at Waterloo.

Must Be Highly Trained and Seasoned.

"It would be not only useless, but

unjust and cruel as well, to send untrained men to the front against highly trained and seasoned troops. They must also be hardened by exercise in the duties of a soldier's life until their physical condition will enable them to endure the hardships of active service. Thus our troops are receiving in Great Britain the same tests of training and of exercise which are prescribed for the volunteer army of the Mother Country. That they will acquit themselves worthily no one can doubt who saw them at Valcartier. In physique, in spirit, in courage, and in all qualities that are necessary for the soldier they will be found second to none.

"If the training of a soldier is important, the training, the skill, and the experience of the men who command them are even more essential and imperative. The officers of the Canadian militia have all the necessary qualities that could be desired. They have given ungrudgingly of their time and their energy to fit themselves as far as possible for the duties of active service. But for them even more than for the men the training and experience at Valcartier and on Salisbury Plain are not only invaluable, but absolutely essential before they lead their men into action. In this grim struggle our forces will face the most highly organized military machine in the world.

Second Contingent Being Prepared Now.

"I have spoken of what Canada has done. The call of duty has not fallen upon unheeding ears in this country. East and west, every province and practically every community has responded with an ardour and spirit which emphasizes the strength of the ties that bind together the Dominions of this Empire. When the first contingent sailed from Canada we immediately announced that another would follow. During the delay which ensued before the War Office, in the pressure of multitudinous affairs, could suggest its composition, it was announced that in addition to the force which had gone abroad and in addition to 8,000 men engaged in garrison and outpost duty, we would enlist and train 30,000 men;

and that from these a second contingent would be despatched as soon as the necessary arms and equipment could be provided and as soon as the War Office would be prepared to receive them. The number under training has recently been increased to 50,000 men, and it is arranged that as soon as each contingent goes forward a corresponding number of men will be enlisted to take its place. This will proceed regularly and continuously until peace is achieved, or until we are satisfied that no more men are needed. Our forces under arms in Canada and abroad will soon exceed 100,000 men. That number has frequently been mentioned in the press. In this war which we are waging against the most powerful military organization the world ever knew, I prefer to name no figure. If the preservation of our Empire demands twice or thrice that number, we shall ask for them, and I know that Canada will answer the call. But remember that men cannot be sent forward more rapidly than the British authorities are prepared to receive them and to undertake their final training. Moreover, we have not in Canada, as in countries organized on a military basis, great stores of equipment, arms, accoutrements, ammunition and guns. These must be provided, and they are being provided with all possible expedition. Both here and in Great Britain these requisites are lacking upon the tremendous scale which is now necessary. Without thorough training, without arms, equipment and all the essentials of warlike preparation, men sent into this awful maelstrom of war are but an incubus and danger rather than an aid.

Only One Issue, But Not a Speedy One.

"There can be but one issue to this war, but do not expect that it will be a speedy issue. I have reason to know that the results hitherto attained have been all that were anticipated by the Allies; but so far as can be foreseen there is a long struggle before us.

"The justice of the Allies' cause is generally understood and recognized among our kinsmen in the great neighbouring nation, and we are proud of their sympathy. A representative of

the German Government in that country has recently thought it necessary to discuss the Monroe Doctrine as it may affect Canada. That doctrine, as you know, does not embody any principle of international law, but is a policy proclaimed nearly one hundred years ago by the Government of the United States. For the reason that it is a policy of the United States that country alone has the right to determine its scope and its limitations. As the policy of a great friendly nation, the Monroe Doctrine is entitled to every respect, but Canada does not seek shelter behind it in this war. The people of this Dominion are eager and determined to take their part in a struggle which involves the destiny of their Empire, and, indeed, its very existence. They are quite prepared and willing to assume all responsibilities which that action involves, and they have a reasonable confidence in Canada's ability to defend her territory.

Quota of Praise for Loyal German-Canadians.

"Four months of war have elapsed, and Canada emerges triumphant from this great test of her unity, her patriotism and her national spirit. It has brought together in co-operation and mutual helpfulness divergent interests, differing beliefs and dissonant ideals. Every province, every city, town and village, and, indeed, every community, has contributed its quota to the magnificent Patriotic Fund, which has been raised to make just provision for those dependent upon the men who have gone to the front. Let us not forget a tribute to the patriotism and generosity of our citizens of German descent, who, in proportion to their numbers and their means, have made so splendid a contribution to that fund. The women of Canada have provided a great hospital, and all Canada is grateful for their untiring activities in the army missions of mercy which they have undertaken. From the Dominion, from every province, from cities and towns, from associations of farmers, from the great labour interests of the country and from individuals, aid has come in a generous stream, and you will permit me to say that nowhere in the Domin-

ion has the spirit of patriotism made itself more manifest in generous and effective aid for all purposes than in your own city.

Unity of the Empire Is Well Demonstrated.

“And this war has demonstrated the essential unity of the Empire. When the book is closed and the story has been told, we shall at least owe that to the Kaiser. It was to fall asunder as soon as he girded on his shining armour. But instead it has become tense with unity and instinct with life and action. Our decadent race was to flee in terror before his victorious troops, but the plains of Belgium and France tell no story of decadence. The history of British arms contains no annals more glorious. It is our hope and our confidence that Canada's record will not be less worthy.

“In the bitterness of this struggle let us not forget that the world owes much to German thought, endeavour and achievement in science, literature, the arts and every other sphere of useful human activity. I do not doubt that the German people, misled as to the supposed designs of Great Britain, impressed for the time being by the Prussian military spirit, and not truly comprehending the real causes of the conflict, are behind their Government in this war. Nevertheless, it is in truth

a war waged against the military oligarchy which controls the Government of Germany. The defeat of that military autocracy means much for the world, but it means even more for Germany herself. Freed from its dominance and inspired by truer ideals, the German people will attain a higher national greatness than before.

Canada Believes That Britain's Cause is Just.

“Canada is united in the strong conviction that our cause is just and in an unflinching determination to make it triumphant. This appalling conflict was not of Britain's seeking. Having entered upon it, there is but one duty, to stand firmly united in an inflexible resolve to force it to a victorious and honourable conclusion. Reverses may come, but they must only inspire us with a deeper courage and greater determination. Our fortitude and our endurance must equal all demands that the future shall make upon us. All that our fathers fought for and achieved; all that we have inherited and accomplished, our institutions and liberties, our destiny as a nation, the existence of our Empire, all are at stake in this contest. The resolution, the determination, the self reliance which never failed Canada in the stress and trials of the past will assuredly not fail her now.