

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1939.

THE CONSCRIPTION ISSUE.

This paper is receiving many communications urging the prompt introduction of conscription as the only equitable method of organizing the country's manpower for the war. A large number are from young men, married and single, who take a practical view of the situation, expect to be called upon to serve because of the prospective magnitude and long duration of the conflict and who believe a fully effective effort requires concentration of all the country's resources to one end. Defeat is not contemplated as an eventuality.

Interest in the subject becomes acute when previous experiences are considered. Canada adopted conscription in 1914-18 in response to an urgent demand from the front, but only after half a million volunteers were in uniform. A widely held opinion then was that it should have been introduced in the early stages. The United States began with conscription. Britain, slow to forego the voluntary system, has commenced this time with mandatory enlistment.

The argument for conscription has been expressed thus by a young man of 28 writing to The Globe and Mail from Winnipeg:

The unanimous opinion of all the young men to whom I have spoken, both single and married, is that immediate conscription in Canada is essential. They, as I do, feel that this is the only fair and equitable basis of carrying on a war. By effecting immediate conscription it will enable Canada to maintain a steady flow of trained men in the event that Canada decides to send an expeditionary force overseas, assuming that those not called up immediately would be receiving military training.

In advocating conscription my idea is to record and classify every able-bodied man between the ages of 18 and, say, 60. By no means would all these see active service. Rather, the older men, particularly those with previous military experience, would be valuable in many clerical and administrative posts. All men, say, between the ages of 18 and 41, fit for active service, to be divided into classes, receive military instruction in spare time or evenings, without pay, and be prepared to answer the call as needed. In this manner men would be available as required, necessary key men to industry would be weeded out, and the administration of our industrial and commercial life would be far more efficient than by sponsoring volunteering.

Without questioning the force of arguments like this or overlooking the probability of conscription if the war is prolonged, there are aspects of the Canadian picture to be considered. We know that if the full force of the country's manpower is

to be brought into play it must be based on a united national conviction. There is no doubt about the ardent feeling in a Province like Ontario with racial roots in British traditions and where thousands of heirs of United Empire Loyalist sentiment reside, shared, but perhaps not recognized, by our Winnipeg correspondent. A multitude of citizens can be found throughout the country with a similar attitude toward the Mother Country.

On the other hand we have the French-Canadians, equally concerned for the freedom assured by British institutions but without the same background. We have also a large percentage of population which came to this country since the last war from non-British countries and lacking the urge to go back to Europe to fight for a cause sponsored by a nation to which allegiance has no direct appeal. These things have to be taken into account in seeking an undivided national effort.

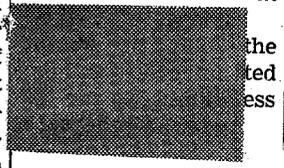
Voluntary enlistment is proceeding in Ontario at a pace testing present equipment. Reports from Ottawa state that recruiting in Quebec goes ahead on no half-hearted scale. The spirit behind freedom of action makes some amends for the weaknesses of the voluntary plan. Considering the situation, those becoming impatient with the apparent slowness of the process might advisedly restrain their feelings for the time being in the common interests.

Undoubtedly there is an impression that the loyal sons who offer themselves unreservedly at pay which is a mere pittance should not have to look back at others, stay-at-homes, and even aliens, receiving high wages such as were paid in the last war without assuming any of the war risks. If there is to be equality of sacrifice it will not be obtained in this way. The voluntary recruit wants to know that while he is enduring hardships and risking life the man who would not offer is not able to make the war a bed of roses for himself.

We are convinced that the Government, fortified by a unanimous Parliament, intends to prosecute the war with all its vigor, and that nothing essential to a successful conclusion will be neglected, not even conscription. It is to be remembered that the struggle has only started and we have yet to get into it properly. The administrative machinery will need many amendments and changes, which will be forthcoming. Changes in the situation abroad may mean changes here. The active part taken by the Communists may indeed have a vital bearing on recruiting. As Quebec's padlock law



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