

(January 4th, 1917.)

A Canadian Derby Plan for Recruiting the Army Without Conscription

By J. M. GODFREY.*

AT a special luncheon of the Club held on the 4th January, Mr. Godfrey said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—Most speakers, in fact all speakers, desire an appreciative and sympathetic audience; I especially desire your sympathy to-day, as I am troubled with the rather common complaint of a bad cold. But more than that, I should like you, the Canadian Club, to give to the plan which I submit to-day the acid test of the critical mentality for which this Club is so famous.

Everyone engaged in active recruiting for any length of time soon becomes a conscriptionist. He sees that the voluntary plan is unfair, unequal, unjust, inefficient, undemocratic, wasteful, and really not British. But when he tries to campaign for conscription, he soon finds himself face to face with what seems to be insurmountable obstacles. He soon is told what he has almost forgotten, that the life of Parliament was extended only after the leaders of both political parties had declared against conscription. He is told that conscription is not possible because forty per cent. of the people of Canada are either apathetic or antipathetic to the war. Also, he is told that with our great unguarded boundary of almost four thousand miles it would be impossible to keep in this country anyone who wished to leave it to avoid conscription.

More important than all other objections he is also told that no party government would dare bring in a policy of conscription which would thereby solidify behind an opposition all the many antagonistic elements in the country. Incidentally he will be told about Australia, and warned of the danger of an Anti-War Government.

If this war is to last another two years, it cannot be finished without conscription, but it is going to be imposed upon us

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not by a party government but by Germany, that is to say, by military necessity.

To those of us who seriously regarded the Premier's New Year offering a year ago of half a million men, the situation is alarming. To fail in our solemn pledge is to stamp this country with dishonor. If Canada does not go the whole way in this war she can never again hold up her head among the great self-governing democracies of the Empire. The confidence with which she is now regarded will be changed to distrust.

What is the situation? While there have been about 385,000 enlistments in Canada, of that number over 60,000 have been discharged, while in Canada, for medical unfitness and for other reasons, and instead of the 100,000 men usually mentioned as being our outstanding obligation, we require at least 175,000 more to pay our promissory note to the Empire. To raise these men we have only broken down and inadequate methods which disregard the vitalities of the situation.

We are told to expect a good deal from the National Service Commission. I don't want to criticize National Service; I am not here to criticize anything or anybody; but, as far as recruiting is concerned, are we justified in expecting great things from the National Service Commission? No good purpose can be now served by criticizing the Commission on account of its party composition, or by reason of the peculiar circumstances surrounding its inception, or the inadequate character of the National registration which it has proposed. The patriotic citizens of Canada have given loyal support to the Government in every measure it has proposed for the better carrying on of the war, and they should and will no doubt do so again for National Service.

But it must not be forgotten that the primary purpose of the Commission is to estimate man-power for the industries of the country, and that recruiting is only indirectly connected with its campaign. Speaking at Montreal the Prime Minister expressly disclaimed making a recruiting speech. It must be expected that the slacker who has for more than two years resisted every patriotic appeal will simply throw in the waste paper basket the registration card which he is invited but not required to fill in.

We have been sending troops overseas at the rate of 15,000 a month. By the time the names of the eligibles have been tabulated at Ottawa the Canadian reserves will have been generously depleted. The problem of maintaining adequate reinforcements in Canada will remain unsolved. The country is entirely without assurance that it is being faced.

While undoubtedly the campaign for National Service if vigorously pushed will be of great value in awakening patriotic sentiment, it must not be forgotten that the Commission has assumed no sort of responsibility for a new and effective plan for recruiting.

Before discussing the plan I have to present, let me discuss briefly the recruiting plan adopted in the 2nd Military Division, with the idea of showing that the voluntary plan is exhausted.

As you know, the 2nd Military Division is the largest in Canada. It has a population of $1\frac{1}{4}$ millions, one-sixth of the population of Canada. Its quota of the half million promised is about 79,000, based upon the eligibles according to the last census. We have enlisted 85,000 men, but of them over 12,000 have been discharged here in Canada, for unfitness, etc., so we have 6,000 more to raise before our quota is obtained. The plan we have adopted is simple, based upon the plan used by both political parties in general elections. First, there is a Central Civilian Recruiting League for the entire Division, with branches in each Dominion constituency. The Division comprises the cities of Toronto and Hamilton and seventeen counties in Central Ontario. The campaign was in the hands of the Central Committee, composed of men of both political parties,—and, incidentally, Mr. President, we had a lot of decent people who did not belong to either political party. The campaign was similar to that followed in a general election. The office of the Speakers' Patriotic League was made a central bureau, from which organizers and speakers were sent forth to assist in carrying on the work in the different counties. They organized each county, with a county association, and that association organized in each polling subdivision a local committee.

As, in an election, the polling subdivision is the active unit, so in this campaign. We held recruiting meetings, hundreds of them, largely on the plan of a sort of big general election and Methodist revival combined, going on for several months.

Splendid results followed, and a great many volunteers were secured in this way. These local committees after the meeting usually made a registration of all the eligibles in the subdivision for the recruiting officers, who would then canvass them. Strong pressure was also brought to bear by public opinion.

This campaign commenced in November, 1915, and was vigorously conducted until the following May. When it began the enlistments in the 2nd Division were about 35,000, and

when the campaign faded away at the beginning of June they had been increased to about 80,000. Thus it was an entirely successful campaign.

But just as you can't carry on a general election forever, and just as a Methodist revival if continued too long burns itself out, so this campaign had to come to an end, and it did, with dramatic suddenness, by the middle of the summer. I want to say to you this: that campaign can never be revived in this country! The methods are obsolete, and any attempt to revive it would be simply flogging a dead horse. You will realize that if you should try it.

What was the next step? The plan I wish to submit to your critical intelligence was submitted to Sir Robert Borden last April. We suggested that out of this Central Recruiting League, with its lecturers and organizers of the Speakers' Patriotic League, a Government Commission be constituted to undertake the whole work of recruiting in the Division, with certain powers, one being the right to appoint in each Dominion constituency in the Division a local Board, say of seven men. This local Board of seven men would be empowered to make at once a compulsory registration of all persons, men and women, in the Division between the ages of sixteen and sixty-five, following British precedent. The returns—I want you to note this—the returns in the first instance, of this registration, would be made, not to Ottawa, but direct to the local Board.

Now when this registration was completed,—and it could be done in this way in about three weeks,—the local Board would have the right to hold sittings in every polling subdivision in the constituency. And it would have one other power, a very important power, the right to compel by subpoena the attendance of any person in the Division at this sitting.

Let me show you how it works out. Let us suppose that you have had a registration, and the local Board is sitting, say in the village of Cooksville, in the Town Hall. They know the names of all the eligibles in the subdivision and the names of their employers. Take some concrete cases:

John Smith, aged twenty-one, works with his father on a hundred-acre farm. The father comes in and says, "If you take him for the army, I can't carry on production, and the farm will have to go to grass." Production has to go on, so the Board, if they are wise, will say to John, "You go back to the farm and serve in production; we will exempt you from military service, and give you a badge showing that you are doing your duty."

On the other hand, next the Smith farm is the Jones farm, on which there are three boys, all of military age, none of whom has answered the call. The Board might tell two of them that they should enlist,—I should say to be sent to farms on which there is no one to work. I think we have gone far enough in taking men from the farms. On the other hand a young man working in a factory or a store selling shirts and neckties, or a man working where a woman could take his place,—these will be told that they should enlist.

You ask what would happen if they don't join? Of course, my plan being to recruit without conscription, they would simply be turned out without a badge. The whole question is, how many of these men could stand the obliquy of leaving the Town Hall and walking out with the whole neighborhood knowing that they have been at an investigation, which tells those who should to go into the army? Very few young men would, in my opinion, dare refuse to accept the judgment of a local Board under this plan.

We hear about confirmed slackers. There are very few confirmed slackers. The trouble is, the confirmed slacker does not think he is a slacker, and very often he is not,—he knows his own circumstances better than anybody else.

You say, "This involves compulsion." I did not say we could raise an army without compulsion, but without conscription. It involves two elements of compulsion: registration, and attendance before the local Board—both compulsory.

But why this sudden tenderness on the question of compulsion? How many of you gentlemen would pay your taxes if you were not compelled to do it? When the decennial census is taken in the piping times of peace, you are compelled to answer and to answer correctly. If you don't clean the snow from your sidewalks the police can compel your attendance before Magistrate Denison. Which is the more important—to keep the sidewalk clean or to do your duty in this war?

It may be said that this plan involves moral compulsion, and that it would be much better to have conscription. On the streets of the city all last winter there was ignorant moral compulsion. But this would be the compulsion of an informed opinion. It would have as its basis a thorough knowledge of the situation in connection with the individual who comes before the Board and whom it is desirous to compel to enlist. And for the first time compulsion would have behind it the dignity and force of Government authority.

This plan has been worked out with special reference to Military Division No. 2, but I think with a little consideration you will see that it will work out all over Canada.

The first question you are going to ask is, "Will it do for Quebec?"

The question of the recruiting situation in Quebec is altogether too complex and involved to be considered fully here. But I want to say to you,—and I have had some little knowledge of Quebec in the past few months,—the more I know about Quebec, the more I am inclined to let the people of Quebec express their own opinions about Quebec. I am not quite so sure about Quebec as I was before I was connected with the Bonne Entente movement. There is too much talk about leaving Quebec out of this or that, and refraining from action in eight Provinces because of this danger or that in Quebec. That talk is deeply resented in Quebec. Speaking with a number of French-Canadians prominent in recruiting, I have been told that they think this plan would work well in Quebec. But whatever you do with Quebec, let the French-Canadians themselves attend to their problems. It is not for us to criticize them or tell them what to do.

This plan could be introduced in Quebec, with the same organization and the same powers. Personally I would leave to the Divisional Committee and the local Boards to say to what extent this plan could be enforced, and where. There are two distinct classes of recruiting in Quebec. A great many say that all Quebec needs is more knowledge about the war, and that a great campaign of education is required. On the other hand, many prominent French-Canadians state that the one thing you can't make the habitant understand is voluntarism. He, however, will obey the law and for this reason, they say, Quebec is ready for conscription, and for six months they have been urging, "Bring on conscription!"

Let me read you a letter from one of these men:

"My Dear Mr. Godfrey,—

"I need not add to our already stated opinion, that this Province is more ripe for conscription than is known to the outside world.

"You have seen refuted by the Quebec Labor Unions the statement that they would not answer the questions of the Service card. On the contrary they have plainly stated they would do so, and advise every member of their Unions to do so.

"No doubt Col. Mulloy has advised you that in August last the Council of Labor of Quebec passed a resolution that they would accept the form of conscription the Government might adopt. We have no Socialists here, thank God."

Now he gives a very interesting historical incident which he

thinks proves that Quebec is ready, as he says by nature, for conscription. "At the time of the Trent affair, as you know, there was considerable excitement in Canada. Two volunteer regiments were formed, the 8th and 9th, and when the 9th was being raised Col. Charles De Salaberry, first Colonel of the 9th, and son of the hero of Chateauguay, was asked to raise a company in Chantilly, his native and seigneurial county. He posted notices throughout the country asking for volunteers and proceeded to enlist the men. Upon the day of his arrival he was met by a delegation of farmers from all parts of the country, and their spokesman, addressing the Colonel, stated that they would not enlist under the volunteer system. Their ancestors, grandfathers and fathers, had been enlisted by 'drawing lots.' The man so drawn (the system of France) had to serve. It was the system used by his father, Col. De Salaberry, in 1812. Why not now? Why should his son serve and his neighbor's son remain at home? If his son was drawn by lot, then he would see that he served." My friends, that is practically the situation in Quebec to-day.

Let me ask you something else. We have heard something about bloodshed and riot in Quebec. Who would be likely to lead it? Most of you men, practically all of you.—Well, I have seen correspondence with Mr. Armand Lavergne—an I a good guesser? Here is what Col. Armand Lavergne says:

"You know how I feel about this war and what are my opinions: right or wrong they are sincere, and I do not go back on them. I have always believed, and do still believe, that our participation, the way we did it, was a mistake from a Canadian point of view; more from an Imperial point of view.

"I claimed and claim yet that we should not have assumed new obligations towards the Mother-country without being granted equivalent rights.

"But, wisely or foolishly, we stepped into the war and now have reached the point where we must state whether we are going on or getting out.

"The public men of to-day or the Government, in my mind, seem to lack the courage of their convictions. They tell the Canadian people: 'This is our war; it is Canada's defence; it is our duty, more, our necessity, to take part in it.' And that is all. Well, as long as the individual's participation is voluntary it implies the right to refuse, and no blame ought to be brought on him for it.

"To have an apology for a milk and water policy, they

blame Quebec, and give our Province out as an excuse for their own cowardice. I, for one, am tired of seeing my Province made the scapegoat for the sins of imbecility of Israel. I would be very grateful to you if you would tell our Ontario compatriots that such are not the facts, that Quebec is not that hotbed of disloyalty to Canada, but that it is only used as a pretext, a mere excuse. There would be no more riot and bloodshed in Quebec than anywhere else. Quebec people are lawabiding, and obey the law even when the law is wrong, until they have had it repealed. I have opposed Canada's participation in this war and am still of the same opinion; but, for God's sake, since we are in the war, let us be in it like men, or step out of it, before being dishonored!"

What does that mean? Is it not a reasonable inference that Col. Lavergne would welcome an opportunity afforded by patriotic men to whom the taint of political partisanship does not cling, to find a basis of unity for the war about which there could be no cavil? You can forget Armand Lavergne's opposition to participation in the war; the important thing is, he says: "Let us be in it like men!" Some way there should be found to get men from all over the country to thrash out this whole situation, regardless of the political considerations which are our bane even after two and a half years of war. Surely we can see in the present situation a great opportunity to achieve the national unity of which many have despaired. The Canadian Club exists for the purpose of promoting Canadian patriotism. The last speaker you heard was Mr. Flavelle. He told you there was enough dynamic force in this room to achieve the unity that is essential to our most honorable emergence from this war. Do you agree that something ought to be done to put beyond all doubt the question whether the second largest Province of Canada will take a national view of the nation's war? How many of you would join in an effort to bring that about?

The plan which I have attempted to outline to you is really a Canadian adaptation of the plan so successfully carried out in Great Britain by Lord Derby, which has in essence the purpose of bringing every Canadian citizen face to face with his individual responsibility in this war. And while the Derby plan had as its chief objective the recruiting for military purposes of men by classes, this plan goes still farther; it will not only get recruits for the army but also for other branches of National Service. It will answer that question which many of you have asked. "What can I do? Tell me and I'll do it!"

Mr. Bennett, you remember, in his National Service speech at Massey Hall, divided the population into three classes, the fighters, the workers, and the payers. The ideal system will be one which will get every man into his proper class. I ask you this, not in a spirit of criticism, is that going to be done by sending a few tons of cards to Ottawa? In order to do this, you must find out what every man can best do; this can be done by local Boards, as has been shown; secondly, you must get the man into his right class; that can be done in only two ways, either by legal compulsion or by moral compulsion. Mr. Bennett says we can't have compulsion. I submit this plan would be the most unobjectionable kind of moral compulsion.

There are two ways in which this plan is an improvement on Lord Derby's plan—because Lord Derby's plan can be improved, as you will improve my plan—the returns must be made in each constituency direct to the local Board. In Britain they were all made to the President of the Local Government Board in London; the result was that it was three months before the names were tabulated and available, and by that time the information had become inaccurate and stale. Mr. Bennett has told us it will take four months to tabulate the names under the National Service registration scheme. I claim that the local registration could be completed in three weeks.

The second important improvement is the power to compel attendance before the local Board. This power, which was not employed in the British Derby plan, will be of great value in the effective working out of the scheme.

Gentlemen, I should like to say one or two words in conclusion. A friend of mine received not long ago a letter from a member of the present British Cabinet. This gentleman took occasion to say how grateful Great Britain was for the help which Canada was giving in this war to the Motherland. My friend, in replying, told that Right Honorable gentlemen that he was entirely mistaken: Canada was not helping the Motherland; she was fighting Canada's own war!

The Premier's message the other day in reply to Lloyd George's inspiring message stated that Canada would continue to fight side by side with the Motherland. Is that really the case? Have we been fighting side by side with the Motherland? Have we not, rather, been lagging away behind? On August 15th, 1915, they had compulsory registration in Great Britain. At the end of 1916 we have no absolute registration in Canada. In 1915, Lord Derby was recruiting his great

army. We are only now beginning to talk of employing those methods in Canada. They are having conscription in Great Britain. We are told we can't have it.

Isn't it about time, Mr. President and gentlemen, that Canada began to fight this war as a nation, as an ally of Great Britain, rather than as a vassal and a flunky?

Is there an alternative? There is. We have raised an army of some 375,000 men, probably 325,000 effective soldiers. We have suffered nearly 100,000 casualties. We have 100,000 men on the firing line. The discharges for unfitness in Canada and the casualties have for several months exceeded the additions from recruiting. Our boys are being wounded and patched up after a fashion, and are being sent back to the front. That is done a second time, and a third time. It is done until at last they make the supreme sacrifice.

There is an alternative. We can let our boys be broken down under the terrible nervous strain of the frightfulness of modern warfare, through lack of reinforcements to give them the rest and relief they must have. We can desert the boys who have taken upon themselves the awful burden of fighting our battles. We can let our army dwindle until it ceases to be a fighting unit. We can, if we want to, let our boys break down. We can default on our bond. But I don't think we will!