

Robert Borden Introduces Conscription

. . . During April and May we enlisted 11,790 men and during these same two months our casualties were 23,939. During the next seven months we need reinforcements to the number of at least 70,000 in order to keep four divisions in the field, and to keep five divisions in the field we need 84,000 men, in both cases principally infantry. Continued offensive operations, such as those of April and May, might increase this number, and if the offensive continues it is not too much to say that we must expect this.

What is the conclusion I have drawn from all this? It is, as I have said before, that reinforcements must be obtained or the three divisions must dwindle; there is no alternative. The reinforcements now available will last for only a few months, the precise number of which, for military reasons, I am not at liberty to state. We all are proud that Canada has played a splendid and notable part in this war. The achievements of her troops have placed her in the very forefront of the nations, and the question before the House and the country today is this: Is Canada content to relax her efforts in the most critical period of a war which concerns her heritage, her status, and her liberty? . . .

. . . I desire to point out that this enactment is based upon the principle, which is as old as the principle of self-government, that while the state owes to its citizens certain duties, the citizen also owes corresponding duties to the state. To the citizen the state assures protection and security of his person and property, the enforcement of law and orderly government. To the state, each citizen owes a duty of service, and the highest duty of all is the obligation to assist in defending the rights, the institutions and the liberties of his country. . . .