

### Halton's Member Gives His Views on Conscription

(Continued from Last Week)

Did he tell them that he had always been in favor of conscription for overseas service? No. Instead of that, what did he tell them? He said he was not sure that public opinion was ready. Then later in the year he spoke in Toronto, again to a group of his own supporters, the Albany Club; he is quoted in The Toronto Telegram—and I hope he will not accuse The Telegram of misquoting him—of October 2 last. What did he say, this hon. gentleman who now says we cannot have an all-out war effort without conscription, and that he has always supported conscription for overseas? Here is what he told his own supporters at that time:

I have been urged to declare for conscription of man-power. What would happen if I did? Immediately the Conservative party in parliament would be divided into two camps. Some will disagree with this view. I have studied it from every angle. If it were put to a plebiscite, I don't know what would happen. I wish you could see the letters I have received, letters from mothers who didn't raise their boys to be a soldier, here we have the national leader of the Conservative party, who last Wednesday expressed in this house the views—I have quoted, speaking to his own supporters in the city of Toronto less than eight months ago. Did he tell them, "We must have conscription"? Did he tell them, "We cannot have a total war effort without conscription"? No. He told them it would not be politically wise. He told them he had received letters from mothers who did not raise their boys to be soldiers. But I want to be fair to the hon. gentleman. It is quite within the realm of possibility that he did not compose that written speech that was read to the house. If the speech was inspired by Toronto I beg of him to tell those gentlemen in Toronto, the next time he gets advice from them, to get themselves elected by popular vote and then come to this house and make their own speeches. There are two constituencies vacant right now, one of which is Winnipeg North Centre and the other, Charlevoix-Saguenay.

Mr. Harris (Danforth): I do not think the hon. member has a right to assume that this message came from Toronto, and then to quote from the message as having come from Toronto.

Mr. Cleaver: I should have been surprised if the hon. member for Danforth had not objected. However I shall have a little of something for him in a moment or two. Probably he will then get up and answer it.

Mr. Hanson (York-Suburbs): Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege, I deny absolutely that anybody but myself wrote that speech, or that it was inspired from any quarter. The young man now speaking is drawing on his imagination—one which is much too fertile. What he has said should be withdrawn.

Mr. Cleaver: I accept the hon. member's explanation. I should like now to deal with another point. I object strenuously to the organized effort being made in this country to misrepresent the whole situation and to light racial fires. In three editorials this year The Toronto Globe and Mail has stated that the promise made by Liberals and Conservatives alike in the 1940 election was made purely to appease Quebec. Fortunately through our newspapers, we have a record of what happened in the past. As we know, before the election the political parties advertised their platform, and they stated in advertisements what they stood for. Those statements were made to attract votes. I hold in my hand a full page advertisement appearing in The Toronto Telegram the day before the election vote. This advertisement was sponsored by the "National Government" headquarters. Leading up to this there were three teaser advertisements, little five-column displays to attract the attention of the people, so that they would finally see the real advertisement. I shall read the one of these teaser advertisements which appeared on March 20:

Vote for these National Government candidates in Toronto ratings: Parkdale, Doctor Herbert A. Bruce; Davenport, John R. MacNicol; Broadview, T. I. Church; Danforth, J. H. Harris. The hon. member who interrupted a moment ago. Then follows a complete list of every National Government candidate in Toronto at that time. That teaser advertisement appeared in the issues of March 20, 23 and 25. Then followed the grand finale. I have made inquiries and I find that this advertisement would cost National Government headquarters between \$400 and \$500 so that they were not fooling. They really meant it.

This advertisement begins with the words "Manion the man," and continues: National government or Liberal party, which does Canada want? Then follow the planks of the platform, one of which reads: "I am against conscription." I ask the hon. member for Danforth (Mr. Harris), who interrupted a few moments ago,

and every other Conservative member from Toronto: Did these hon. members contribute their share, of the \$400 or \$500 to publish those advertisements in The Toronto Telegram, telling the people of that city that they were opposed to conscription? Did they do that just to appease Quebec?

Mr. Harris (Danforth): If the hon. member wishes an answer as to who paid, I can give it. It is a simple one, of only two or three words: it is none of your business.

Mr. Cleaver: I thank the hon. member for Danforth, and I agree that is the only answer he could give me. That promise was made on practically every political platform across Canada. It was not made solely to please or appease Quebec. It was made because we all believed that this country would make a better war effort, would raise a better army perhaps, under the voluntary system, than we could ever have raised under conscription. Besides that, we had had a very unsatisfactory and bitter experience with conscription at the time of the last war.

The bill now before us for second reading has for its purpose the removal of territorial restrictions in connection with the services rendered by men raised under the National Resources Mobilization Act. The plebiscite vote was called to permit the people of Canada to release not only the government but every hon. member in the house from promises which most of us had given to the effect that conscription would never be enforced for service overseas. Everyone now realizes that the present war may be a very long one. Events move rapidly. The time may come when voluntary recruiting will dry up. No one knows what will happen. It is only a matter of good business judgment to come back to the people and, in the light of existing circumstances, ask for release from the pledge.

During the debate in the house on the plebiscite, and throughout the campaign in the country, the pledge was given by the leader of the opposition that this was not a vote for conscription. I read now an extract from his speech delivered over the national radio network on April 20: This plebiscite is simply to give the government and Mr. King release from a commitment not to enlist men for overseas service by compulsory methods. That primarily is the only issue involved. Emphatically it is not in this specific vote an issue for or against compulsory service for overseas. It is merely a vote to release, or refuse to release, Mr. King from a pre-election pledge.

Concluding the speech, he said: You are not called upon by this plebiscite to declare for or against conscription for overseas service. What may come, it does not follow from this plebiscite. It does not follow from these words. Let us now analyze the vote. There were 2,921,286 who voted "yes" and 1,688,669 who voted "no." At page 3527 of Hansard the leader of the opposition is reported in these words: We labored untidily to achieve an affirmative result. And again: and I believe we contributed mightily to the result. The government did likewise: the government gave a similar assurance to the people—that this was not a vote of conscription. The Prime Minister coupled with that the definite assurance that conscription would not be enforced until it could be demonstrated that it was necessary. On top of that, practically every private member of this house campaigned his own riding for a "yes" vote. I spoke at eight meetings in my riding, and I sent out circular letters, signed not only by myself but by the defeated Conservative candidate, which asked the voters to vote "yes," and which assured them that they were not voting for conscription.

If in the final analysis the total effect of all that the total weight of the Liberal party and the personal influence of all members of this house; if that combined effort caused only 700,000 voters to vote "yes," who would otherwise have voted "no," then the plebiscite would have been defeated had it not been for the assurance which was given. So I say to those who would lightly brush aside this assurance: Think well before talking that way any more. I could hardly believe my ears when I heard the leader of the opposition, last Wednesday, "any effort to make it appear that the affirmative vote was nothing more than a release of the government and of parliament is not facing the facts." On April 20 he is said that it was merely a vote to release the Prime Minister from his pre-election pledge, and on June 10, less than two months afterwards, he said, "If you consider the vote anything more than a release, you are not facing the facts." Did you ever see such a right about face in less than two months? I suggest to my hon. friend that the outstanding reason why the Conservative party does not hold the public confidence to-day is that they do not keep their promises. Further I say that this last episode proves conclusively to me that they do not even intend to keep their promises when they make them.

Coming to my own view on conscription, I wish to admit frankly that the vote in Quebec was a great surprise and a bitter disappointment to me. Nevertheless the taking of the plebiscite has served a useful purpose and has been of great assistance

in the final solution of the problem, in that it has clearly indicated just what is our problem. Whether we like it or not, irrespective of who is to blame for the feeling, irrespective of the cause, we in Canada are faced to-day with the fact that 80 per cent. of our French-Canadian population are bitterly opposed to conscription of overseas service until it can be demonstrated to them that it is necessary. This being so, it is quite apparent to me that nothing but harm could ensue to Canada's war effort were we to attempt to impose conscription at the present time before it is necessary.

Up to date French Canada has come along the full mile with us on a voluntary basis. We have had over 70,000 recruits from Quebec for service anywhere in the world. Quebec has gone over the top with the Red Cross campaigns, the victory loan campaigns, the war service and every other war campaign that has been put on. On top of that, the production of war equipment and war supplies in Quebec is equal to the production of any province in the country. If any hon. member doubts that statement, I ask him to visit the gun plant at Sorel, the aircraft plants at Montreal, and the great shipbuilding plants in the province. In the light of all this, it is wise to imperil all this voluntary effort on the part of one-quarter of our population by imposing conscription before the need for it actually exists?

Let us analyze for a moment the one and only reason which is advanced by anyone in favor of conscription. I have yet to hear any member of the house assert that the voluntary system is not raising the men required for our military program. I have yet to hear any serious criticism of Canada's military program. No one knows better than the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Ralston) what that program should be. On February 10 of this year the minister outlined Canada's requirements for the following fifteen months. He told us that we would need 70,000 to 80,000 men for the air force, 13,000 men for the navy, and from 80,000 to 100,000 men for the army. Those were the requirements for the period January 1, 1942, to March 31, 1943. We have raised already by voluntary enlistment over 8,000 of those men. It is quite obvious therefore that our military requirements will be met by voluntary enlistments months before we need them. Even The Globe and Mail in a recent editorial admitted that voluntary recruiting is taking care of our military program. It said:

The real gravamen of the indictment against the voluntary system lies in the unfairness of its incidence. It is not that there is any shortage of voluntary enlistments; it is that we have not equality of service. I do not believe that the present campaign for conscription was instituted by those who honestly believe in conscription. I believe it is purely political in its character. I cannot lose sight of some of the sources from which the present campaign started.

You cannot collect \$600,000,000 by means of the income tax, as we have done in twelve months, without treading on someone's toes. During the last war less than \$10,000,000 in income tax was collected under the national government. Why would they not want national government? The only way to get national government is to advocate conscription.

There are some disgruntled politicians in this country who would sabotage Canada's war effort or do anything to gain their own selfish ends. If anyone could convince me that conscription would lead to equality of service, I would gladly revise my views. I think one example is enough to prove how illusory the term "equality of service" is. During the last week an air force officer, a boy from my community, was reported missing after a raid over Germany. He was a bright, healthy, clean living boy who had been a leader in sports at high school and who had graduated in agriculture from the Guelph agricultural college. He enlisted in the air force, qualified as a pilot, and went overseas a few months ago. Last week, Tim was reported as missing. I ask you to place the sacrifice of this young man in the scales on one side of the balance; then on the other side pile on the contribution made by his chum in Canada. I do not care if he works twenty hours a day in a factory, I do not care if he gives all his surplus wages for war purposes, I do not care what he does; his sacrifice is not comparable to the sacrifice of the young lad who gave his life. There are "super-loyalists" who drum up "equality of service" as an argument in order to try to divert French Canada from the war effort. I say to them: "Forget about equality of service; there is no such thing." I have heard other people say, "Let us slough off French Canada and get on with the war." Did you ever hear such a reckless statement?

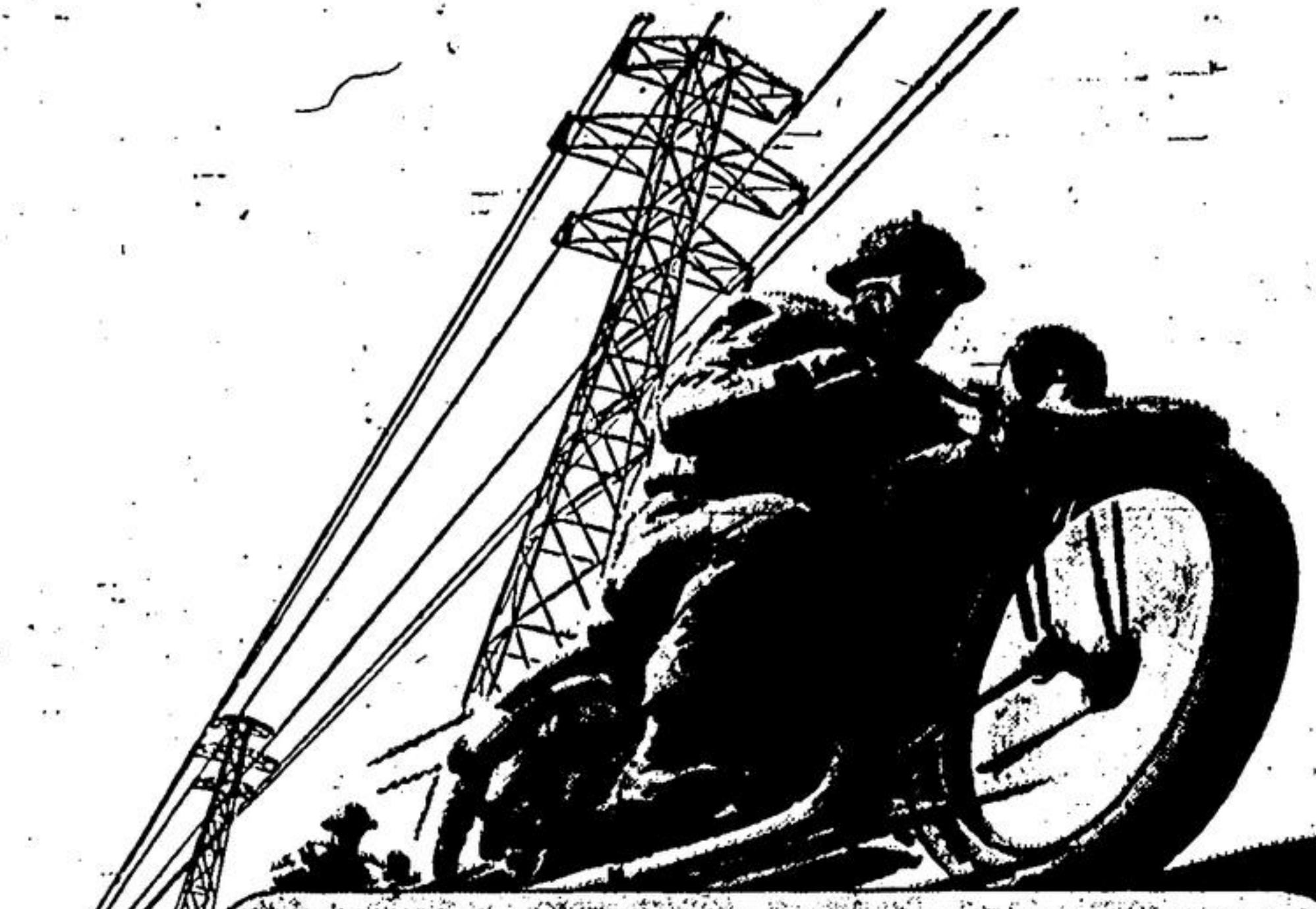
Did you ever hear of a hockey team winning a game with 25 per cent. of its team in the penalty box? Again, I admit at once that French Canadians are one step behind those of English-speaking Canada with regard to conscription, and why should they not be? Blood ties are stronger than any other ties. But what would you think of a cruiser convoy that would steam away from 25 per cent. of its merchant ships simply because they were one knot an hour slower than the other ships in the convoy?

There is another point on which I should like to touch before I conclude. The fact that this whole conscription issue has been magnified far beyond its true import is another proof that it is politically inspired. It does not affect the air force, nor does it affect the navy. Great Britain, notwithstanding the fact that she is under constant threat of invasion, still holds to the voluntary system for both the air force and the navy. This fact speaks much more eloquently than any words of mine could speak in favor of the voluntary system.

Again, conscription does not affect the gift to Britain of one billion dollars' worth of planes, tanks, guns and foodstuffs, which in dollar value is three times the total effort of this country in the peak year of the last war. In 1918 this country spent for

all its war purposes only \$343,000,000, and inflated dollars at that. Conscription does not affect our war production of foodstuffs. Conscription does not affect our industrial production of planes, tanks, guns. (Concluded on Page Seven)

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