

April 18, 1942

PERSONAL

Right Honourable W.L.Mackenzie King
Ottawa, Ontario.

My dear Mr.King:-

I listened with a great deal of interest to your address broadcast on Tuesday evening, April 7, and have carefully studied the text as published in the press the following day. I consider the address a masterly presentation of one side of the case, and, I might add, the only fair and honest presentation of that side of the case of which I have any knowledge. You made it quite clear that the only release the government requires is from the pledge "not to resort to conscription as a method of raising men for military service overseas."

Your argument, masterly though it was, still leaves me unconvinced that I should vote "yes." At the time the pledge was given it looked good to me; and nothing of which I have any knowledge has since transpired, nor have I been able to imagine anything that might occur during the future progress of this war which would make conscription preferable to voluntary enlistment for military service overseas.

What I shall say is not intended to be criticism of the government for submitting the matter to the people. Under all the circumstances, with a large section of the press calling for conscription for no other purpose than to embarrass the government; and other sections of the press either influenced into quiescence, or afraid to take a stand on the question; with members of parliament being swayed by these subversive influences, the government acted wisely in submitting the question to the people.

However, it is one thing to approve of the plebiscite, and quite another thing to commend the proposal to release the government from its pledge not to enforce conscription. In the opinion of the writer the reasons for the plebiscite are good reasons for voting "No", and refusing to grant the requested release. This does not imply a lack of confidence in you, or in your judgment. My confidence in you^r and in your judgment was never greater than it is at the present time. I regret that I cannot say as much for all your colleagues and other liberal(?) members of parliament.

The personnel of parliament has changed much during the last twenty-five years; but the character of the members has not greatly improved during that time. I have not forgotten how, in 1917 one after another of Sir Wilfrid's closest friends were swept off their feet by influences similar to