

## King Explains the Introduction of Conscription

. . . Well, having been fortunate enough to secure General McNaughton as Minister of Defence, the government then started to see what could be done in the way of a public appeal. General McNaughton himself began the appeal.

. . . I believe with all my heart that a public appeal would have succeeded if we had received the support of honourable leaders opposite, if we had received the support of their following, if we had received the support of their press. Does anyone doubt that for one moment? I say we would have had the necessary men through voluntary enlistment but for the organized opposition that was taken to voluntary enlistment. From this time on, those who have been responsible for this organized opposition will have on their heads the responsibility for what may follow in the present and over the years.

It was in these circumstances that the cabinet met parliament and that I asked my colleagues to meet me the evening after we had concluded the first day's sitting. I had a special reason for that. It was that General McNaughton himself, in conference with his staff, had come to the conclusion that it might be taking too great a chance not to act immediately. That presentation was made to the government, and with it I made a passionate appeal to every one of my colleagues—I think I may so describe it—not to press for any extreme position; to be as united as they possibly could, yielding up the extreme position, whether it was for all-out conscription under Bill 80 or whether it was for no conscription, realizing that there and then we were face to face with a situation which meant that if we could not agree and could not meet parliament the next day in as united a position as was possible, the only result would be that I would have to announce, on behalf of the government, that we were not in a position longer to carry on because the division in the cabinet was so complete as between those supporting the one point of view and those supporting the other. . . .

. . . I say that unless this House of Commons can unite in reasonable measure to support an administration that can carry on at this stage of war we shall have to face the possibility of anarchy in Canada while our men are fighting overseas, giving their lives that we may maintain our free institutions and that we may have peace and concord through the years to come. Hon. gentlemen may belittle those words, but they are words, no matter to what party the one who uses them belongs, which are entitled to the greatest consideration that can be given. . . .

