

# LEADING LIBERAL PAPERS OPPOSED TO SIR WILFRID'S PLAN FOR A REFERENDUM

**HAMILTON TIMES Declares Liberal Leader Lost Greatest Opportunity of Lifetime to Show His Devotion to Highest Interests of Canada—Toronto Star Urges English Liberals to Stand Together.**

## TORONTO NEWS SAYS LAURIER PLAYS INTO HANDS OF PACIFISTS, SLACKERS AND ALIEN ENEMIES

The following comment on Sir Wilfrid Laurier's demand for a referendum on the conscription issue appears in a number of the leading papers of Canada today:—

### TORONTO GLOBE (Liberal.)

"The issue before Parliament is definite. The duty of Parliament is plain and imperative. In no degree has the situation been altered by yesterday's proceedings. There is no room for compromise between the principle of compulsion and the principle of voluntarism. They cannot be reconciled by a formula, or bridged by any of the arts of political expediency. A referendum would transfer the conflict from Parliament to the hustings without changing its character, but with the loss of months of time when every day is vital if the wastage at the front is to be repaired. The military argument against it is overwhelming.

"Chivalrous opponents will give Sir Wilfrid Laurier the credit of trying to maintain the national unity to which his life and career have been dedicated, and this can best be served if he retains his personal authority in the province of Quebec."

### TORONTO STAR (Liberal.)

"The Star is opposed to a referendum on the issue of conscription, not because we fear it might result in an adverse vote, but because if we are to have Government by referendum it should have been resorted to at the outset of the war, and it should have been taken on the question whether Parliament should carry the country into the war. But we didn't have it.

"Parliament as it is at present constituted—made up of the members who now sit in it, is responsible along with the Government for sending along our armies into the war. Are these members going to support the men they have sent to the front or are they going to repudiate their pledge and withdraw Canada from the war as fast as our abandoned battalions are wiped out on the battlefields?

Not to be Ignored.

"The party aspect of the situation so far as Liberals are concerned, has its national importance and is therefore not to be ignored. The way out for English Liberals, who believe in conscription, is for either leaders to stand by their convictions (drawn off neither to the right nor the left) and to preserve for the English portion of the Liberal party in Canada a rallying point around which it may gather when the issue is fought out, as it must be, throughout the Dominion sooner or later.

### HAMILTON TIMES (Liberal.)

"Sir Wilfrid has lost the greatest opportunity of his life to show his devotion to the highest interests of Canada and the Empire by intervening to prevent the immediate application of conscription to the country. His whole life is a testimony to his integrity and loyalty, and we would impugn neither. But if we are all prepared to make the supreme sacrifice rather than come under the German yoke, the sacrifice now demanded of us cannot be denied. For the Government's many sins, blunders, mismanagement and extravagance a day of retribution will surely come."

### BRANTFORD EXPOSITOR (Liberal.)

"The chief objections to a referendum, seems to be the delay which would necessarily be involved at a time when avoidable delays should be unthinkable; that it would throw the country into a turmoil compared with which the enforcement of selective conscription would be nothing in comparison and that it is contrary to the precedents set during the war by Great Britain, New Zealand and the United States."

It concludes:

"Finally, a serious objection to a referendum is that, despite the good offices of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, which he would undoubtedly give, there is no guarantee that conscription should carry on a referendum, that that would end the resistance. While there is at least some probability that as a result of the ill-feeling developed during the election, there would be greater hostility than ever."

### WINNIPEG FREE PRESS (Liberal.)

"Politically it is difficult to see how the moving of this amendment, whatever may be its fate, can be of service to the Liberal party. Assume first that it carries. The Government will then have no alternative but to dissolve and appeal to the country. The Government's position would then be clear; but the Opposition would be in the position that it had by a parliamentary expedient avoided the necessity of registering its views. This would do the Liberal who was anti-conscription no harm; but it would put the Liberal members who favor conscription in an impossible position. The whole Liberal party, however vociferously the Liberal members who favor compulsion might protest their innocence, would be definitely committed by the rejection of the measure on its second reading, to a policy of opposition to compulsory service. Liberal members who favor the principle of the bill, ought to realize what a vote for this amendment means.

"If, on the other hand, the amendment fails, the cleavage which exists in the Liberal party will be revealed in the House on the second reading. Neither Liberal group will

then get credit for the sincerity of their opinions. The public will say that they tried to evade meeting the issue, and only took the straight-forward course when no other road was open to them.

"The immediate concern of the Free Press is that, in a matter of this kind, there should be an end of evasion and a frank acceptance of the realities of the situation; that this is a real war. There is no make-believe about the fighting in France. The casualty messages that come into the homes of the people record the death or mutilation of real people.

"It is the essence of reality to say that our armies at the front will be destroyed unless they are reinforced from home, or are protected by soldiers of other countries which have found neither constitutional nor political difficulties in the way of compulsory service. The proposition before the Canadian parliament is that the methods which have been adopted by every belligerent nation, save one, shall be resorted to here to secure additional troops for the front. It is a clear-cut, intelligible proposition. It ought to be accepted or rejected promptly, in order, in either case, that the next available step may be taken. Instead of this promptness there is the prospect of weeks of shadow-dancing at Ottawa."

**MONTREAL LE CANADA (Liberal.)**

"Sir Wilfrid's speech is an epoch in parliamentary history. It is not only because Canada is in danger, but because all civilization is in danger of being swamped by German barbarism that Sir Wilfrid has approved of Canada's participation in the war. But it is not necessary to establish Prussianism in Canada, as is proposed by Sir Robert Borden, when he seeks to pass the conscription measure by a parliament whose powers have expired and without consulting the people."

**MONTREAL HERALD (Liberal.)**

"On both sides deep-rooted conviction is a factor and on both sides, unfortunately, there are those whose first thought is of political advantage. Politically, it is a lamentable condition which is unlikely to bring glory to either party. In considering the question, the world must know, and politicians must know, that there is not one 'win-the-war' party; there are two 'win-the-war' parties. The difference between them is how most effectively to do it, all things considered.

"This is no time for the talk of loosely-hung tongues and it is no time for the questioning of your neighbors' patriotism. For it is likely that the opportunity will come to every Canadian to record his opinion—perhaps not in the form of a mere referendum, but possibly in the guise of a general election, with all its ramifications. Canada

is in this war to a finish and there is no wavering on the part of the people. What they want is strong, wise leadership. Given that, the people may be counted on every time."

#### **MONTREAL GAZETTE (Con.)**

Under the caption: "A Laurier Mistake," the Gazette in its comment on the conscription issue says the leader of the Opposition did not need to argue that the Militia Act did not provide for conscription to carry on such a war as is now disturbing the world. Neither was his statement that Canada was in no danger from Germany, an argument against what the Government proposes. Parliament, it says, can enact conscription for the purpose of securing the safety of Canada whether the danger is on the banks of the Somme or on those of the St. Lawrence. The Government's record and its knowledge of what conditions in the country are suggest that it would not have proposed conscription had anything less effective been available. Sir Wilfrid Laurier would have been playing a greater part had he recognized the facts of the situation and given his approval to what he felt he could not venture to condemn. His suggestion of a referendum is weak and untimely."

#### **TORONTO NEWS (Conservative.)**

The Opposition leader, seeking for delay, plays into the hands of all the pacifists, slackers, and alien enemies in the Dominion. He encourages and fortifies his own compatriots in their hostility to the bill, instead of using his immense personal influence in bringing them into line. The great wave of anger which has been rising against the Liberal chieftain all across the English-speaking provinces has risen visibly higher since his speech of yesterday. Sir Wilfrid Laurier courts the least patriotic elements in the population at the expense of the gallant Canadians in the trenches, but in the effort he is wrecking his own party and destroying his own reputation as a statesman of national and imperial stature."

#### **LONDON FREE PRESS (Con.)**

"The question which the leader of the Opposition raises is whether a single province may block the way to Canada succoring her sons on the fighting line. Quebec is amenable to the laws of Canada, or she is not. The majority rules or it does not. The day of minority rule has gone by. Harmony is maintained by playing the national game on an equality basis. Quebec is fully represented in the law-making of the land. She ought to be as fully represented in the law-keeping."