

Brothers. Their purpose that evening was to prevent another blunder being made, and to strongly urge the Legislative Assembly to disregard entirely those who were engaged in sowing discord and attacking the Catholic Church in a vital spot by advocating the sending of priests, Brothers, and students to the firing line merely to serve their own political ends. The people overlooked the important point that Catholics, far from being disloyal, were deeply concerned in the success of the Allied forces, because there were probably more Catholics fighting with the Allies than non-Catholics. The members of the Government had repeatedly implored the people to do everything that would tend to win the war, to economise in every possible way, and yet maintain national efficiency; or, in other words, to keep the "home fires burning." In regard to education, Catholics during the war period had saved the Government approximately £350,000—a somewhat handsome contribution to the national purse, but for which the Minister of Finance issues no War Loan scrip or other acknowledgment. Catholic Brother teachers, working under difficulties at all times, had during the war period done their work bravely and uncomplainingly. Living as they do a celibate life, they nearly all come under the First Division, and consequently comparisons made as there have been between them and the State school teachers were manifestly unfair. But even if public school teachers had enlisted in large numbers their places had been readily filled with experienced ex-teachers, thus maintaining public school efficiency unimpaired. With Catholics the position was entirely different, as if the Brothers are called up the salary attached to the positions would not attract applicants, and consequently the schools must be closed. To prove that these teachers had done their work loyally and faithfully from the viewpoint of Empire, one would most readily get the answer (if it were possible) from the trenches in Gallipoli, Palestine, France, and Belgium. The speaker exhibited a photograph of fifty former pupils of the local Christian Brothers' School, forty-five of whom were either at the front, had made the supreme sacrifice, or were already in camp. When the Territorial system was introduced some years ago and the Cadet system was incorporated, there was no encouragement given to the Brothers to occupy the positions of officers in the companies formed at that time. If it was right to keep them out then, surely it must be right now. In conclusion, he said: "I have sufficient confidence in my broad-minded fellow-citizens to feel that where important issues are at stake, and such a ridiculously small number of Brothers are in question, the matter will receive the consideration it deserves, and our Government and legislators before whom the issue will come for final review will pass judgment upon it in accordance with the unanimously expressed wishes of the Catholic body and their sympathisers."

Dr. O'Sullivan supported the resolution as one who had been through the conflict on several fronts and had seen most of the good work done by the late Rev. Father McMenamain and the Rev. Father Dore (now invalided back to New Zealand). He wanted to take the opportunity of referring to a fact attributable to the good work of the Catholic chaplains: that out of 200 men stricken with a certain disease in Egypt only one was discovered to be a Catholic, and he owned up to not having been inside a Catholic church for 14 years. Such results must make Catholic fathers and mothers proud of their priests and their religion. The speaker vigorously advocated unity of action in the present crisis.

Mr. J. O'Connor pointed out that only a very few students were being appealed for. There were 18 in Mosgiel and 12 in Greenmeadows who were now reading their theological course—a total of 30—and it was a very small lot of men to win the war with! A medical student in his third or fourth year of study was exempt from military service, and surely students for the priesthood deserved similar consideration.

On being put to the meeting the motion was carried unanimously amid prolonged applause.

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The chairman moved that the meeting call upon the Government to so amend the Military Service Act to secure the exemptions asked for, and that copies of these resolutions be sent to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, and the local members of Parliament.

Mr. M. Reddington, in seconding, said that the proper percentage of Catholics of the fighting strength of this Dominion on the basis of population would be at most 14.30 per cent., whereas there were approximately 16 per cent. of Catholics in the Dominion's fighting forces, a very great portion of whom were voluntary enlistments. In the face of that fact they were told by irresponsible fault-finders that they, as a community, had failed in their duty. He (the speaker) contended that the Catholics of New Zealand desired to continue doing their duty to the Government in the future as they had done in the past, and he felt sure that this attitude would be reciprocated by the Government.

The motion was supported by Mr. J. O'Neill, and carried unanimously.

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