

CONSCRIPTION OF BROTHERS AND STUDENTS

RESOLUTIONS OF PROTEST.

Under the auspices of the Marist Brothers' Old Boys' Association a crowded and most enthusiastic meeting of Catholic laymen was held on Wednesday evening, August 1, in the Hibernian Hall, Auckland. Long before the proceedings commenced the hall was packed; seating accommodation was overtaken, large numbers being obliged to stand. One could easily discern the simmering excitement and high tension running through the assemblage, and above all there was a downright earnestness in evidence which during the evening was made manifest. The proceedings were from first to last of a dignified, lofty tone, begotten of the sacred and high duty which called those men from every part of the city, and miles beyond it. It was a memorable gathering, and will long remain impressed on the minds of those who had the privilege to participate in it.

Mr. Eugene Casey, president of the Marist Brothers' Old Boys' Club, presided, and in his opening remarks said:—We have met to consider one of the most serious problems with which the Catholics of the Dominion had as yet been confronted, namely, the conscription of Marist Brothers for military service. They were not there to dictate to other sections of the community as to what they should do in prosecuting the war, but when their clergy and Brothers were threatened with conscription the Catholic people cried "Hands off." The Catholics regarded the teaching Orders as an essential part of the system of the Church. They wanted to impress upon the public that the Marist Brothers were as priests engaged in the work of secular and religious instruction of the youth of the Church. In England the clergy, religious teachers, and religious students had not been conscripted, and the Catholics in New Zealand wanted the same treatment. (Applause.) If the Marist Brothers were taken, many of their schools would have to be closed, but they would not relax in their efforts to prevent the cause of Catholic education being sacrificed.

Mr. R. McVeagh moved: "That this meeting of Catholic men respectfully protest against the conscription of religious Brothers, and records its solemn determination to prevent by all constitutional means their being taken from their essential and legitimate occupation." Mr. McVeagh said that serious and solemn rights of the Catholics were being invaded, and it was their duty to ask that the matter be remedied immediately. A large number of people did not understand the position, according to resolutions published in the press. The conscription of Marist Brothers imposed a disability that was not put upon any other section of the community, and it was the duty of any Government with the welfare of the people at heart to prevent that disability and see that right and justice were maintained toward all classes of the community. (Applause.)

Mr. M. J. Sheahan on seconding the motion said: The resolution moved by Mr. McVeagh must command not only the whole-hearted support and sympathy of Catholics, but of every person who believes in and adheres to Christianity. Cardinal Newman defined Christianity as "universal benevolence." To-night we are assembled to demand our rightful share in that "universal benevolence." It cannot be said that the inclusion of a dozen Marist Brothers in the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces would hasten by one day the

latter's arrival at Potsdam. It is not, therefore, for military reasons the Brothers are required, but for quite another reason: to injure, if not to close up, our Catholic schools. No Government should be guilty of such a crime.

The following resolution was proposed by Mr. P. J. Nerheny:—"That this meeting of Catholic men extend its sympathy to the individual members of religious Orders who as loyal citizens have been placed in a false position by the operation of the Military Service Act." In speaking to the resolution Mr. Nerheny said it was unnecessary for him to ask for sympathy for the Brothers in the trial to which they were now subjected. They entered into the very lives of our people. They took in hand the education of our children from childhood, preparing them for their first confession, communion, and confirmation. A departing soldier had said to him (the speaker), "Should anything happen to me, I ask you to see that my children shall be educated by the Marist Brothers." Was it any wonder, then, that we resented any interference with our Brothers?

Mr. Prendergast in seconding the motion said that those organisations and persons who had thought fit to pass resolutions or write letters to the newspapers containing reflections on the Marist and Christian Brothers by reason of appeals for exemption having been lodged were not surely fully seized of the position. The Military Service Act permitted exemption from service being granted where appellants were engaged in essential industries or occupations. The Brothers were surely engaged in as essential an industry as one could conceive. It might be said that the public schools were available, but Catholics demanded something more than the public schools could give, they required religious instruction for their children and to be imparted by their own teachers. To compel the Brothers to render military service was not only an injustice to them when they had devoted their lives to the great work of education, but was a distinct injustice to the Catholic community, which has erected and maintained schools at considerable cost to themselves.

WELLINGTON.

The following motion was unanimously passed at a meeting of the parishioners of the Thorndon parish, Wellington, to be forwarded to the authorities:—"That this meeting of the Thorndon Catholic parish enters its earnest and emphatic protest against the calling up for active service of Brother Oswin (W. P. Doody) under the Military Service Act. In doing so the signatories on behalf of the parish, all of whom have children attending the school, desire to make two points perfectly clear. The first is that if Brother Oswin is called up the Marist Brothers' School at Thorndon will have to be partially closed. The second point is that the Catholics of Thorndon, as elsewhere, have done such good work in connection with war service that they feel they are entitled to some consideration in this particular respect. Hundreds of the Marist Brothers' pupils in Thorndon alone fought for the Empire long before compulsion came into operation. Some have made the supreme sacrifice, some are wounded, some have done deeds which redound to the glory of the Empire. We urge that if you take a step which will result in the partial closing of our school you will commit an act inimical to the nation's interest, because there is no more fruitful source of patriotism than the schools in charge of the Marist Brothers."

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