

I was elected by a very large majority for the constituency of Kings in 1940 to come to Ottawa to support the Liberal party, under the leadership of the present Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King), and in 1942 that government was released from its commitments in regard to conscription. A few weeks ago I was again given the nomination for my own riding and I pledged myself that when I came to Ottawa I would support the Liberal party. If I had not done that I would not have been given the nomination for the next election.

On Tuesday night last we were privileged to listen to an able speech delivered by the member for Lotbinière (Mr. Lapointe), who is himself an officer fresh from the battlefield opposing the Germans. He told us that conscription was unnecessary, undesirable and uncalled for at the present time, and I do not believe that the soldiers at the front are asking to be reinforced by conscripts at this stage of the war.

Opposition members have been telling us about numerous letters they have been receiving from soldiers overseas asking for reinforcements to come quickly. I think there are in the fighting lines as many soldiers per capita of population from my constituency as there are from any other constituency in Canada, and I have received no such letters. I have received letters from wives and mothers asking that their husbands or their sons who are overseas be sent home for a rest if they have been over for four or five years, and I am glad to note that that is the policy of the new Minister of National Defence.

I am sorry that I cannot support the subamendment moved by the hon. member for Mercier (Mr. Jean), although personally I favour the voluntary system, and I want to see a united Canada, but this is not a free-for-all system of government. We are told by those who should know that the voluntary system has fallen down. That should not have happened after five years of wise planning. That is, of course, my own opinion, but regardless of the comparative merits or demerits of voluntary enlistment and the conscription system I do not believe that compulsion would have been necessary at this late stage of the war if someone had not blundered. I do not think the Prime Minister of Canada was the one who blundered, although it might have meant disaster to him and to Canada. However, in accepting the resignation of the former minister of national defence (Mr. Ralston) and appointing in his place a man of General McNaughton's well known anti-conscription views, the Prime Minister has

proven his sincerity in the belief that the voluntary system had not so suddenly fallen down, and it is hard to believe that it did.

If the motion before the house carries we shall continue to have a voluntary system as well as power in the hands of the Minister of National Defence to send reinforcements overseas from the home defence army if necessary. If the amendment carries we shall have total conscription and nothing else for anywhere in the world in the hands of Tory exploiters and profiteers as we had it after 1917, with its abuses and scandals, which will never be forgotten.

If compulsion is inevitable, of the two evils I intend to choose the lesser and to vote for the motion of the Prime Minister, thereby permitting our unsurpassed war effort to be pursued without interruption until final victory is achieved over Germany, which I believe could have been done under the voluntary system properly managed.

In other words, I intend to stand by the Prime Minister of Canada, and that is what the vast majority of my constituents want me to do. I am glad to see the Prime Minister in such good form and that he knows when he should relax, for on Monday night when the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Boucher) was reading to him a merciless lecture, prepared no doubt at Bracken House, the Prime Minister, who had heard the same type of speech recited on several occasions recently, fell sound asleep and continued to sleep for ten minutes until precisely eleven o'clock, when he awoke, apparently much refreshed, which reminds me that repetition is one of the best treatments for insomnia. Try it. If you go to bed to-night and cannot sleep, repeat over and over again one of those little prayers that you learned at your mother's knees and you will soon be in dreamland.

Hon. P. J. ARTHUR CARDIN (Richelieu-Verchères): I do not intend to prolong the debate. My only reason for rising at this time is to clarify the position I am going to take when called upon to vote on the amendment to the amendment now before the house. I propose to vote for the subamendment of the hon. member for Mercier, not that I so much like the wording of it or the manner in which he has expressed his views; but in the main I claim that the subamendment contains an expression of opinion in favour of the continuance of the voluntary system and, second, an expression against compulsion, against conscription. Therefore while admitting that the wording of the subamendment has not been very happy—in fact, it is poor—I ap-