

question be from the man or the woman in the country, "Why ask me? You ought to know. You were put there to govern. You say your policy is total national effort for total war. Go ahead; don't ask me if you may."

There are in this country a considerable number of people of stocks other than English and French who came here and threw in their lot with us, and whose descendants, with our descendants, we hope, will build a greater and grander Canada. Very many of them have not yet sufficiently mastered our language to be able to follow the niceties of the question, when is a commitment not a commitment?

Mr. MARTIN: And vice versa.

Mr. STIRLING: It may be difficult for them to find their answer, yet the sons of many of them are in the armed services, and they under wise leadership would be as anxious as we are to defend liberty.

I could have understood the action of the government had it submitted a measure susceptible of simple explanation to people, asking for a yes or a no, though I could not have agreed with the action, because I hold that a government is put there to govern. But, to ask the people if it may be released from a commitment, and leave its subsequent action a mystery, is making government in this country a laughing-stock. In this plebiscite the government will have to use methods, yet to be described to us, for the purpose of informing the far-flung population as to the reasons and the facts connected with the question which they are asked. It will be no easy matter to do that. There are hundreds of thousands of people in this country who do not read a daily newspaper. Some of them no doubt see a weekly newspaper. There are, I do not know how many hundred thousand who listen to the radio; perhaps it runs into the millions, but my impression is that the dial is very quickly turned off when something entertaining ends. How are the government going to inform the people in detail of what this question means and why it is asked? If the government can answer that question satisfactorily, they may make those of us who dislike the idea of a plebiscite a little less hard against it.

The Prime Minister indicated yesterday that, in his opinion, three courses were open to him, and that two others had been suggested to him. But, Mr. Speaker, there is a sixth course open, a course which I think is the one this government should have followed. The proper course would have been to submit the difficulty of a commitment to parliament and take parliament's answer.

This government was returned to power by a considerable majority. Each one of the members is the chosen mouthpiece of the constituents he was elected to represent. It is to them the Prime Minister should turn for an answer to the question: May I be released from a commitment which I made when times were far different from what they are to-day?

To parliament he can relate the facts, to parliament he can divulge the difficulties, far better than they can be explained to the population at large. Members of parliament are delegates sent by the people, they are sent to express opinions on whatever questions are put before them. The majority wish of parliament is supreme. Under a democratic system what possible objection can be voiced to letting parliament decide? Then the course that this government should follow would be to get on with what it calls its policy of total national effort for total war; get on with it though it is a year late; make use of national selective service so that the available man and woman power may be put to the best possible use, and then see the Canadian people adapt themselves to their duty and accept sacrifice and self-denial if these are required.

Mr. R. W. GRAY (Lambton West): Mr. Speaker, in rising to express some views on the speech from the throne presented to this house on Thursday last, may I first be permitted to congratulate the mover of the address in reply, the hon. member for Hull (Mr. Fournier), and the seconder, the hon. member for Brantford City (Mr. Macdonald), on the excellence of the material chosen and the clarity with which they expressed their views. Both these hon. members have recently returned from a visit to war-time Britain, and it is therefore fitting that they should have been chosen for this high honour. They have discharged their duty with credit to themselves and to the constituencies which they represent.

Since we met in this chamber in November last, a new and powerful enemy has attacked us. But a new and more powerful friend has joined us. When the history of this war is written, I feel certain it will be found that the part which the present Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Mackenzie King) has played as liaison officer as it were between England and the United States, in forging those links which now bind the English-speaking nations together, will rank among the highest of his achievements.

Mr. Speaker, we have passed through difficult times; we are facing times more difficult. We have achieved much; much remains to be done. That there is room for criticism the