

Referendum and General Election Methods of Consulting the  
People which are Undesirable in Present Circumstances.

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draft  
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There are, of course, two methods which the government might adopt to obtain the freedom which we believe we should have at this time in carrying on Canada's war effort. A general election is one of them, and a referendum is another. The objection to a general election at the present time is that it would not be in the interests of the people themselves in the existing crisis to leave the country without a Parliament for the time that it would take to hold such an election. Moreover, other issues entering in, it would not be possible to say that the verdict of the people, whatever it might be, had related solely to the issue of the application of conscription for overseas service.

The objection to a referendum on conscription is that far from freeing the hands of the government, it would be a specific request to the people to make a decision for or against conscription. A plebiscite differs from a referendum in that a plebiscite is taken to ascertain the views of the people whereas a referendum is a request for a decision by the people on a specific plan or project. The government does not believe that it would be fair to the people to ask them to make military decisions. The government itself alone can know all the circumstances and reasons which necessitate a particular course of action.