

*Reinforcements*

Mr. JEAN-FRANCOIS POULIOT (Temiscouata): Mr. Speaker, might I have the ear of the house for a few moments on this twenty-third day of November, 1944? I have been most appreciative of the kindness extended to me by members on all sides of the house. Sometimes discussion has been heated on both sides but no rancor has been left. Since I have been in politics I have been a Liberal and have been a true supporter of the present Prime Minister. I remember having stood alone in fighting the social legislation of Mr. Bennett. I carried on a campaign with Mr. Hepburn and with some of the present cabinet ministers in thirty-five counties of Ontario, and I spoke at the nomination of another minister and took part in the campaign. I did all that for the Liberal party because I believed in the Liberal party as led by the Prime Minister.

I have been brought up in the respect and love of Liberal principles and traditions, and when I was young I learned English in the speeches made by great Liberal leaders of Ontario. Those speeches were translated into French as brain food in times of election. Since the beginning of the war I have done my best for the soldiers of my constituency and for some others even in this city of Ottawa. I have looked after the welfare of soldiers who, in virtue of the law, had the right to ask for postponement. Then I tried, and I succeeded, in having amendments to the national war service regulations and so on.

I regret that this session has been called to give major importance to a minor quantity. At the same time I congratulate the present Minister of National Defence upon his successful day. He has answered questions very well.

I regret very much that now it is impossible for me to agree with the policies of the government, for several reasons which I will give in due course. I have the most pleasant recollections of my dealings with the Prime Minister and most of his present colleagues, and I wish them the best of health and success in life. But when I have to make a choice between my constituents and the present government, I cannot hesitate; I stand by the people of my constituency, and this is my last word. Therefore, sir, I regret very much to have to cross the floor of the house right now.

Mr. COLDWELL: Before we adjourn, a few moments ago the leader of the opposition said that perhaps after all we had not got very much out of to-day's questions and answers, and I think that is not wholly untrue. Many or at least several of the questions which have a vital bearing on these matters

have remained unanswered, because the minister stated, and I think quite properly, that he could not give that information in public session. I believe that every scrap of information we can get should be obtained in public session, but where the information is of such a nature that it might give some aid or comfort to the enemy I think it is the duty of members of this house, as representing the citizens of this country and as patriotic citizens themselves, to bow to the decision of the Minister of National Defence. I am strongly of the opinion that we should have this information, for without it we do not know what will be the condition of the reinforcement pools overseas from time to time, and we do not know actually what the situation is with regard to expected casualties. Therefore we cannot judge whether this order in council gives sufficient power to the minister to do all that is necessary in order to protect the men overseas. Therefore I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that we ought to try to get all the information that will guide us, and since the minister could not give the information that was desired to-day in public, in some particulars, and stated that he was ready to give that information in private session, that the suggestion of the Prime Minister should be followed and that to-morrow we should get that information in confidence.

Mr. GRAYDON: It is after eleven o'clock, Mr. Speaker, and I do not want to say very much at this time, but I should like to say a word with respect to what the Prime Minister said a few moments ago. Since the beginning of this session I have made a valiant effort to keep our position on the highest possible plane, and I think most hon. members will say that I have succeeded. I am sorry that the Prime Minister took the time of the house to make charges in regard to lack of cooperation and so on, because it seems to me that at this time we should not get down to that sort of thing.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: It was my hon. friend who raised the question.

Mr. GRAYDON: If at this stage the Prime Minister will just try to follow my example I think we shall all get along very much better. I do not wish to have these charges stand as though they were of the kind that I should not or could not answer. I only want to leave that thought with the house, because I believe we should do our utmost to keep this discussion on a very high plane.

With respect to the question of a secret session to-morrow, I do not know why the leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation party and the government are so

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]