

wealth of nations and without the nations allied with Great Britain are hoping and praying in their hearts that—

The meteor flag of England
Shall yet terrific burn,
Until danger's troubled night depart,
And the star of peace return.

Is there a Canadian heart to-day, in the depth of its secret places, that does not hope and pray the same?

Mr. J. A. BLANCHETTE (Compton) (Translation): Mr. Speaker, I highly appreciate the honour of being asked by the government to second the address in reply to the speech from the throne. I thank the government on my own behalf and on behalf of the citizens of Compton county, which I have the honour to represent in this house.

I am particularly happy to note that the right hon. the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) and the government have fulfilled the promise which they made to the country to consult parliament before engaging Canada in any military conflict. I find therein an additional reason to give my confidence to the government, all the more so that I am certain that my feelings in that regard are shared by the Canadians of every origin living in the county of Compton and, generally speaking, by all the enlightened citizens of my province as well as of the entire country.

It is quite noticeable that the members of this house do not assemble to-day in the spirit that usually marks the opening of a session of parliament. Instead of the gaiety and enthusiasm which usually prevail when we return to our parliamentary duties, we cannot help feeling anxious and we realize more than ever the extent of our responsibilities. This year, the prayer which opens our deliberations was listened to with deeper emotion and greater fervor than ever before.

The war clouds which have been darkening the skies of the civilized world have now clashed, starting a conflict the consequences of which cannot be foreseen.

For months and even years the two great European democracies, England and France, have, in a spirit of conciliation verging at times on the acceptance of humiliation, tried every pacific means to maintain peace in the world and avoid a repetition of the war of 1914. Their efforts have failed. To-day, the two doctrines, that of justice and conciliation and that of might making right, have come together in the war which has just burst upon the old world as a frightful calamity.

This country, a member of the British commonwealth of nations, cannot remain indifferent in the conflict which has just started. No one can seriously maintain that our mem-

[Mr. Hamilton.]

bership in the British commonwealth, to which we are all proud to belong, is motivated solely by the advantages it may afford us. Can it be seriously contested that a declaration of neutrality by this country would be tantamount to a declaration of independence?

Is it not a fact that Canada, having grown up in the national sense as well as in the economic and social fields, must assume obligations which belong to peoples who have attained the age of majority? No longer are we minors to whom others can dictate decisions, to whom others can impose obligations, or who can be neglected or ignored on account of their state of infancy or weakness.

Proudly, even brilliantly, we have attained the period of majority, of responsibility. No one can impose obligations upon us. We are free to act according to our own will, but it would be unworthy of us to reject the responsibilities that belong to us as a mature nation. In considering our situation, we must not fail to weigh the possible consequences of our present attitude.

The government of our country, of which I am proud, has adopted the appropriate attitude in the circumstances. They have taken and enforced the measures which were essential in a country like ours, a country conscious of its obligations as well as of its duty. But, before going further, they wished to consult the people of the country through their representatives, thus applying the democratic principles consistent with the British parliamentary system which we have lauded so much in the past and which still deserves our approval.

To my mind, that approval takes greater strength if we compare our system to the totalitarian system, which has no consideration for the individual, for the people itself, and which is the cause of the conflict that threatens once more to plunge the civilized world in a sea of blood. Some will perhaps find reasonable arguments to justify differences of opinions on the measures already taken or contemplated by the government; but I submit that those questions must be,—and I hope they will be,—considered seriously, with calmness, moderation, good faith and sincerity. I fervently hope that violence, excitement and prejudice will be banished from our deliberations, as such meannesses should be, and also from the discussion of those questions outside of parliament.

Appeals to violence and prejudice have never settled any problem. Only a serious, calm and unprejudiced study of the issues can lead to an acceptable solution.