

permit overseas service if, as and when the governor in council thinks it necessary, which in my opinion will be never, as long as this government is in power. I have a great admiration and respect for the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King); I think I have known him longer than anyone else in the house, and anything I have to say is what I believe to be the truth and without offence to anybody, because I speak only of principle. I regret the results of the action taken by the government in regard to this legislation. My leader in the house and the whole Conservative party in the Toronto district supported the plebiscite and the "yes" vote. The leader of this group addressed a letter to the Conservatives in every constituency asking them to support the plebiscite and to vote "yes", although we on this side of the house opposed the plebiscite. I myself did not believe in the plebiscite because I believe that on the government of the day rests the responsibility to carry on the war. It is their function as long as they are the government; under the parliamentary system and the constitution the responsibility is theirs; it is something that they cannot evade notwithstanding pledges and that kind of thing.

As far as this particular pledge is concerned, when the trouble was on in 1922 and 1923 and one of the leaders of our party said that if war came he would like a referendum, I opposed my leader and told him that in this house and outside the house as long as I belonged to the party I would never see Mr. General Election become commander in chief of the British forces; I would never allow Mr. General Election to become admiral of the British fleet, because before Mr. General Election could open his ballot boxes the enemy could sail up the St. Lawrence and bomb the citadel at Quebec, blow up the public utilities in Montreal and blow down this building and the Chateau Laurier and all our institutions. For that reason I opposed it, and because I have always believed in the principle that when Britain is at war Canada is at war. Everything we in this country have we owe to the mother country. She bore the brunt of the whole war for the first two years. Had it not been for her the axis powers would have been in America, and Ottawa and Washington would long ago have had to make peace with them.

As I say, there is only one clause in the bill; it is merely enabling legislation giving the governor in council power to act if, as and when they consider it necessary. I regret that this action was taken at all, because I believe the Prime Minister and his cabinet

have done a great deal of good work. I am not one who would say anything to the contrary, because I believe they worked hard—so hard, in fact, that it has affected the health of most of them. I believe they have done their best, and what they believed to be their duty. But I do say that the government was ill advised in having the plebiscite, and in acting the way in which it did at that time. I say that because in my opinion the plebiscite has led to wide disunity, from Vancouver to Halifax. It has fomented wide dissension from coast to coast, and has frustrated the ideals of the fathers of confederation.

The principle of the bill, as indicated by the hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Roebuck), is just enabling legislation. When addressing a meeting in my constituency at the time of the plebiscite I said that I did not believe in it. I had voted for a six months' hoist, because in my view a plebiscite was not the proper way to deal with the matter. When addressing my constituency on March 5 at the Masonic hall, I urged them to vote "yes" on the plebiscite, although I had said the night before I had voted for a six months' hoist.

My observations are reported in the Toronto papers of March 6, as follows:

A lot Hitler and Japan care for plebiscites. The axis partners may arrive in Canada before the ballot boxes are open.

Then the article continues:

Taking the plebiscite, he characterized as "War according to Hollywood, and not according to Hitler and Japan," and he predicted that "It will, when taken, like the national register, be consigned to the archives."

"The people are fast losing all confidence in our free parliamentary institutions in Canada and in their public men," said Mr. Church, accusing the government of "several rounds of shadow boxing, such as the sham plebiscite route to glory. If the people vote Yes the government will take one pace forward and four paces backward in the war effort."

"It is no time to belittle those who for five years before the war had predicted it. If I were one of those who had changed my views—like some in the house—I would have come to the House of Commons and taken the penitents' bench, and would have said that a change of opinion had been forced upon me by Hitler and Japan, and that I regretted my past actions in opposing rearmament and coordination and cooperation with Britain. But, No! They pose now as super-patriots, these pacifists in all parties. If Hitler and Japan come to Canada they will take the plebiscite and all connected with it, and hang them on the sour apple tree—like was done with John Brown's body. History always repeats itself."

Those were my views. They were honest views, and I had expressed them in the house before. I am sorry that my opinion differed from that of the citizens' committee during