

commitments and undertake to enforce conscription without any prior consultation with the people. In other words, I am being asked to sell my birthright for their mess of pottage, and to destroy whatever confidence the people of Canada may possess in my honour as a public man, and, in doing so, also to destroy the confidence the people possess in the honour and integrity of the government.

Those who speak and write in that way might be prepared so to act, but I am not. If we wish to destroy, not at this time of war alone, but for all time, the last vestige of confidence which the people of Canada have in their free political institutions and in their public men, that would be the most effective way to go about it.

The government, having, for the reasons I have mentioned, decided to seek from the people, by means of a plebiscite, release from any obligation arising out of any past commitments, proposes, without delay, to introduce legislation to set up the required machinery for conducting the plebiscite at the earliest possible date. The plebiscite will be taken with the minimum of expense consistent with equitable and efficient provision for a full and honest expression of the views of the people.

I need scarcely say that in the machinery which may be necessary for the conduct of the plebiscite, special provision will be made for ascertaining the views of the men on active service in the armed forces.

I shall not go into detail regarding the procedure to be followed in holding the proposed plebiscite. The question which the government proposes to submit to the people is the simple and straightforward question:

Are you in favour of releasing the government from any obligation arising out of any past commitments restricting the methods of raising men for military service?

It will be seen that in seeking freedom for itself to act on all matters pertaining to war in accordance with its judgment, the government is taking a course which will remove all legitimate excuse for controversy, and the course best calculated to maintain the unity of the country in this time of war.

Mr. HOMUTH: Then what will they do?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: That will depend in part upon what my hon. friend and those who are round him will do.

Mr. HOMUTH: Do not worry about us.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I am quite prepared to trust the people; my hon. friend certainly is not. Just here may I pause to say that if my hon. friend is afraid that the people will pronounce against conscription,

for that is what he has in his mind, and he is still prepared to have conscription put into force without any reference to the people, then I should like to know how he expects that the unity of this country is going to be maintained.

In the presentation of the plebiscite to the electorate the desire of the administration to possess complete freedom of action will, of course, receive the vigorous and whole-hearted support of all members of the government. It will, I hope, receive the support of every member of parliament, and will, I believe, receive the support of the Canadian people.

Mr. M. J. COLDWELL (Rosetown-Biggart): Mr. Speaker, I could not begin my remarks this evening without first congratulating the mover and the seconder of the address in reply to the speech from the throne, who were our good companions on a recent trip to Great Britain. They acquitted themselves in a manner which, I believe, won the congratulations of hon. members on all sides of the house. I thought that perhaps at times their praise of the government was a bit extravagant; shorn of these superlatives, their speeches were admirable.

I want to take this opportunity of expressing my own appreciation for the extensive tour of Great Britain so generously provided by the British branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association, and to express particularly my thanks to Sir Howard d'Egville, who supervised the arrangements on this side, to Sir Drummond Shiels, to Mr. Spencer-Hess, and to the British Ministry of Information, who combined to pilot us around Great Britain. Nor must we forget to thank, too, the Hon. Vincent Massey and Mrs. Massey and our splendid staff in the city of London. Every one of them did everything possible so that we might see all those things which visiting parliamentarians ought to see, and to make our stay in Great Britain as pleasant as it could possibly be under the grim circumstances of war. And Britain was grim. I knew from past experiences the British seashore and countryside. I would scarcely have recognized some of the places that I had known in my boyhood days. But in spite of the grimness we found a cool, courageous people engaged in a people's war and determined that when this conflict ended, there would be a people's peace and that the British people would build a new Britain in which the people might find security and peace.

But I should like to say more about those things at another time. To-day we are at the beginning of a new session of parliament. We