

*Mobilization Act—Mr. Diefenbaker*

King) and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner), both of whom have consistently opposed military service overseas, and from whom, having regard to the speech to which we have listened to-day, we cannot ever expect in my opinion to have military service overseas regardless of what the people may demand. As to the attitude taken by the Minister of Agriculture, he goes much farther than even the Prime Minister did. He says: All that we ask in the removal of section 3 is the opportunity to be free to carry on our obligations as a government, to give consideration to matters as and when they arise and to make a "yes" or "no" decision on the question of conscription for overseas service in the future.

The Minister of Agriculture went on to point out one circumstance, Mr. Speaker, which to me epitomizes his attitude towards this question. He said that regardless of conditions, however dangerous our situation as a country and an empire may be, any party government to-day which would bring in compulsory military service for overseas would have no regard for the political future of that party. Surely that is a dangerous attitude to be taken by a member of a government charged with the aspirations of the people of Canada and their right to survival. However dangerous the situation may be, mark you! He pictured that danger when he spoke of the situation in the Aleutian islands; yet in the face of all that he said: I stand where I have always stood; my consideration,—and no doubt he was speaking for the members of the government around him—is political survival at some time in the future, even though the world may stand in danger of being one great concentration camp. The minister and members of the government who sit around him have made a great contribution in the sending of their sons to fight overseas, and I honour them for that. But great as that contribution is, the Minister of Agriculture nevertheless stands up in this house to-day and says: The ballot box—right or wrong, "yes" or "no"—the ballot box.

I hope and trust that some of the other ministers who have not yet spoken—the Minister of Finance (Mr. Ilsley), the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Gibson), the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Ralston) and the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services (Mr. Macdonald)—if they speak in this debate, and I think they are challenged to do so, will disavow the attitude expressed by the Minister of Agriculture as not representing the present attitude of the government.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

In 1939 and 1940 things were looked at differently from what they are to-day. The Prime Minister himself, speaking in western Canada in the 1940 election campaign, said, according to the report in the press at the time, that there was general agreement that it was extremely unlikely that expeditionary forces from Canada would again take part in a European war. That was his attitude then. The Minister of Agriculture made a speech about the same time which secured a great many votes for his party, and in that speech he divided the people into three groups. Speaking in the town of Markinch, he said, according to the press report:

The entry of Canada into the war had resulted, Mr. Gardiner said, in three groups with varying opinions as to the best method of prosecuting the war. First there was a group that did not wish to do anything, then another that wished to do everything, and a third, a sort of in-between group. He, said Mr. Gardiner, hoped he belonged in the in-between group.

In the first category was the C.C.F. party, from whose platform he read a number of clauses, but referred particularly to the call for the conscription of wealth for war. In the second group was the party headed by Hon. R. J. Manion, that opposed the conscription of men to be sent out of Canada; they did not mind conscripting men for the defence of Canada. The Liberals, through their leader, Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, had already taken their stand—no conscription of men, and no direct conscription of wealth, but men and money for the prosecution of the war.

That was his attitude in 1940. After all the changes that have since taken place, can it be true that the attitude of isolationism which characterized some members of the government prior to the outbreak of the war is still the attitude of the government? Let us look at the record over the years. Let us examine first the record of the government with respect to man-power. It is the record of a government which has been forced to take a stand on the man-power question day by day and week by week. The leadership which has been given to this country has been a leadership based on political expediency. Deny it as you will but the record stands—a temporizing and a postponing of consideration so far as the man-power problem is concerned. I frankly admit that the material contribution of Canada has been very great. Our contribution to the navy and to the air force and to the production of munitions has been something of which Canada may well be proud. But so far as man-power for overseas service is concerned there has never been any dynamic force or vision shown by this government. Its attitude has simply been to move step by step as and when it was forced to do so. It has been a record of treating the man-power problem in a