

So that there may be no misunderstanding among my English- or French-speaking friends, let me say that my stand in the house, in my own riding and in my province, is that I am supporting the policy of the government. I will say to the people of my province, "If you want national unity now, make this sacrifice." I do not know whether those who have spoken against the French-speaking people in Canada would make the same sacrifice.

Our second reason for favouring the new policy is that when we in our province become friendly with somebody we stick to him through thick and thin. In Quebec we have been supporting the right hon. the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) for the last twenty years. Just look at the membership of the house and see where the largest number of his supporters come from. Well, we are going to see him through in this fight, and we are going to support him. We are going to ask our people to forget the past and to rely on the judgment and the patriotism of the man who is now leading the destinies of our country.

(Translation) Since the opening of hostilities, the position of this country has certainly changed. At the beginning we had on our side our powerful ally, France, which has since fallen by the wayside. We had with us all the small nations surrounding France—Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway—which, in spite of their policy of neutrality were invaded and conquered. For a time England had to carry on the war against Germany and Italy all alone with the support of the dominions and colonies. Until the 22nd of June, 1941, Great Britain's position, if not desperate, was at least extremely dangerous. Germany's attack upon Russia gave the British a few moments of respite. There was a let-up in bombing. Great Britain was able to develop her war industries, train her soldiers, manufacture munitions and prepare the defences which I saw myself when I was there in October and November last.

On the 7th of December last the war spread to the entire world. Without warning, Japan attacked American possessions in the Pacific. She also attacked Great Britain, and to-day, except for a few small nations, the whole world is at war. In what position do we find ourselves? A small nation of twelve million souls, we need allies in order to protect our lives, in order to ensure our survival on this north American continent. We need to make all the efforts and sacrifices which patriotism dictates.

I am aware that the speech from the throne contains a reversal of policy concerning which the people's representatives cannot lightly

[Mr. A. Fournier.]

adopt a definite position. I admit that in the minds of my colleagues from the province of Quebec various arguments may arise to justify their attitude one way or the other. Personally, I have adopted a position, and my chief reason is that I am in favour of the doctrine preached for so many years by the late leader of the French Canadians, Right Hon. Ernest Lapointe. He has appealed to us, from one end of the country to the other, to be united in the face of danger. He has pointed out to us the need of national unity if we wish to preserve our institutions, our religion and our language, because in the event of defeat all these privileges, all these rights would vanish. I say to my colleagues from the province of Quebec that the teachings we have received from honest men, who for years have preached in my province a certain doctrine, were given openly, sincerely and above-board. These men were not contradicted even in 1940, by our opponents from the other side of the house. Everyone was against conscription. The people voted as a whole against conscription.

To-day the government is asking to be relieved from its commitments and promises.

The government requests a free hand, if this should become necessary, in order to be in a position to send some of our men abroad. They do not say that, to-day or to-morrow, conscription will be imposed on this country. They ask to be released of the obligation they had assumed and their present attitude is that of honest men. They have made promises. Now circumstances prevent, or will prevent their keeping them. They want to be released from them. They again appeal to the people who have placed them in power. If I am in this house, I owe it to the people, to those who supported my candidature in past elections. If the Prime Minister occupies his seat and represents the people to-day, he owes it to the members of this house and, ultimately, to the people. He has no wish to follow the advice of those who say: "Yours is the responsibility of establishing your government's policy. It is your duty, with no regard for the people, to pass a law of conscription." No, as an honest man, he says: "I shall again go to those who sent us to this house and ask them to be relieved of our promises." Circumstances have changed or may change later. We are in peril, our country is in danger. I could adduce in support of this policy, the opinion of many people from my province. In the face of imminent danger, who will refuse to give his all for his country's salvation? I have said in English, and I now repeat, that I will support in this house as I will outside the house, in my constituency as anywhere in the province of Quebec, the government's request embodied in the speech from