

*Reinforcements*

men of the N.R.M.A., and that the situation is urgent. He comes home and so advises the cabinet, but he finds his advice ill received; in other words it is rejected. He presses it until he is asked to resign. In taking that action the Prime Minister was perfectly correct and only following constitutional practice. When a member of the cabinet is in disagreement with his colleagues on any major policy it is his duty to resign, because the cabinet could not profitably exist or cooperate if one section were working against another; there is no doubt about that.

What is the position now? After hearing the views of the followers of the former minister, perhaps, or for some other reason the cabinet reverses its policy, in part at least, and decides to send overseas 16,000 men; to make sure there will be no doubt about it an order in council is put through to-day specifically setting out that number. I highly approve that policy, except of course that in my view it does not go far enough; it should have been left open to send more later on. But I notice that the order in council puts the whole weight upon something the minister has to do; he may do this, or he may do that. It gives him a great deal of leeway. Now, to quote scripture, the position is that "the stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner", and what position does that put us in now? According to the correspondence and the speeches in this house and also the speeches over the radio by the Prime Minister, it was on your advice, Mr. McNaughton, that the government took the steps that were taken in regard to not sending these men overseas, which linked you up with the anti-overseas service policy of the government.

If any further proof were needed your own language this afternoon would supply it. You reiterated not once but several times with more force and determination than you have given to any other expression of your views that your full belief was and still is and would be to avoid force or conscription, and not one of those men would go over if you could possibly avoid it. That is strong language from a man who has just been sworn in a few weeks ago to carry out the policy of the governor general in council and the cabinet, who now place their faith in a policy directly and diametrically opposed to those that you gave expression to this afternoon. Your subordinates in Ottawa and elsewhere throughout the British empire or wherever our troops are will know those words of yours, will know the language forthwith. They will know and must know that, no matter what your written instructions may be, your real views are those you have so strongly indicated

[Mr. Neill.]

this afternoon. Your ideas, your wishes, your views are diametrically opposed to the policy you are now sworn to carry out. Failure would justify your action, and it would be pleasing to you if it proved to be that your policy was correct.

This is the question I should like to put to you. The question is really twofold. One part of it applies to your subordinates and the other part to yourself. In such circumstances can you as a businessman and a capable soldier expect strong cooperation from your subordinates throughout the army towards the policy towards which you have just now expressed such dislike, such hatred it might almost be called? I have been a soldier myself and I know how completely easy it is to receive instructions and to carry them out in such a way as to vitiate the whole intent of the written instructions. It is a long time since I was a soldier, but I can remember getting instructions and if they did not suit the officer or the colonel or the boys how easy it was to walk through them.

I will go farther and appeal to you yourself. In view of your former position does not the changed policy of the government and the fact that you have not changed, as you had a perfect right not to change—I give you honour for sticking to your opinion—justify and compel you as a man of honour to tread the same narrow path of self-sacrifice that was trod by your predecessor and force you to resign so that someone else can carry out the new policy of the government which now is so entirely different from that which you advocated this afternoon and this evening.

Just one word more. You may well say that it is not my business; that it is a matter for your conscience and your concern. But we are facing the greatest crisis since confederation. This may mean the breaking up of confederation and we have to throw aside any loyalty to party and courtesy itself indeed to an individual. We must ask ourselves only one question: What does this mean for Canada? I would hate to be anything but courteous to the hon. gentleman with his very fine record, but still there is something bigger and better than friendship or loyalty or anything else but the best interests of Canada. I ask you the question again as man to man. In your honest opinion would it not be better for the cabinet to which you now belong, for the Liberal party to which you now adhere or to the greater interest of the people of Canada whose interests I know you have at heart, and the welfare of Canada and the best interest of the war, if you gave way to a