

The sole purpose of the plebiscite is to obtain for the government, and for parliament, a perfectly free hand in dealing with this, as with all other questions. All you are being asked to say is whether or not you are in favour of the government's hands being perfectly free at this time of war. That is the meaning of the question to which you are being asked to reply YES or NO. If you reply YES, you will not be committing the government to conscription for service overseas; but you will be enabling the government and parliament to discuss and decide that question solely on its merits. Members of the government and members of parliament will no longer be suspected of being influenced in their judgment by political or other considerations arising out of promises or pledges which have been given in the past.

When I spoke to you on April 7th, I said that I would not be true to the trust the people of Canada had reposed in me did I not say that I believed the situation, for all free nations, was far more critical than it had ever been. I added that Canada's position was no exception. I said then, and I wish to repeat tonight, that I have never been an alarmist. Throughout my public life, where I believed the situation required it, I have always tried to measure my words, to speak with moderation, and