

of the government at the present time is a new policy if it is compared with the one which was enunciated by the Prime Minister on February 25 last, and in his two broadcasts over the Canadian network.

There is no necessity at the present time to impose conscription. There is no haste to proceed with such an important measure, which is likely, in the words of the Prime Minister, and in the words of the Leader of the Opposition as well, to destroy the good understanding which has been established between the two races in Canada for the last forty or fifty years, through troubled hours and difficult days, by the leaders of all parties and those who have taken part in the public life of Canada.

With the deepest feeling of sincerity I say now to the government, wait please, wait for the necessity to arise. Let us wait for the need to present itself, and then we shall be in a position to judge according to circumstances what course Canada should follow, what policy Canada should adopt.

It is no argument, as I see it, to say that such a course would involve delay and that the House of Commons and the Senate would require time to adopt the procedure for conscription if the need should come. That is no argument. Parliament can be summoned to Ottawa in seven days. In seven days we can be called here to decide on any emergency which may arise in Canada or elsewhere. In seven days conscripts are not going to be sent overseas. It will take more than seven days or ten days or fifteen days or a month to send the conscripts overseas. Nothing would prevent the government from preparing the machinery the moment they decide to have recourse to conscription. Nothing would prevent them from calling parliament together and ask for advice and support. It would be far better than trying now to delete Clause 3 and saying "that we have no intention of abiding by the result of our action in parliament." In the name of heaven, what is the use of having a dead principle in our statute books and destroying the good understanding that has existed throughout Canada.

Let us be frank. I am not ashamed to raise my voice in this parliament although I come from a minority—from the province of Quebec. I am not afraid and I am not ashamed. We have the right, as any other representative, to speak in this house in the name of the French minority; I have the right to speak in the name of those whom I am supposed to represent here. I take second place to no one, so far as Canadianism is concerned. I have done my duty.

I repeat, let us be frank. If we had asked the electors of Canada whether they were in favour of or against conscription for service overseas, the vote would have been different from that which was registered on April 27.

It is all very well to say that we have been released from our pledges. Yes; we have been released from these pledges by those to whom they had no meaning or no effect in the election. The pledges that were given in the election of 1940 were given by both parties, the opposition as well as the government. In those days the pledges were given to appease public opinion and to collect votes in the province of Quebec. Both parties did it at that time, and now it is said that we have been released. Yes, I repeat, released by those who were not interested at all in those pledges, and in constituencies where the pledges were not an issue during the election. It was easy for those gentlemen who had not spoken of these pledges during their election to ask for a yes vote in their constituencies. It was all right for them to go to their constituents and ask that freedom be given the government to impose conscription. That was an easy task, and it was a victory—let me say this without any implied insult to these hon. gentlemen—without any great honour, because it was a foregone conclusion. My position was different. When I appealed to my people in the province of Quebec, to whom the pledges had been given, in the most sacred and solemn manner that pledges could be given, by the Prime Minister, by the late Mr. Lapointe, by myself and by other members from the province of Quebec, my task was not the same as that which faced these other hon. gentlemen. We did not get the same answer that they received. That should surprise no one.

For fifty years, for sixty years, yes from the time of confederation up to the present time, arguments have been used to induce the people of Quebec to believe that they would never be forced to go to war outside the limits of the country which had been wrested from the wilderness and from savages and given to Christianity by their ancestors. The people of Quebec, the minority in Canada, as I have said, have no reason to be ashamed of the attitude its members are taking.

So far as I am concerned I have a quiet conscience as a result of the course I have taken in resigning the two portfolios which the Prime Minister was kind enough to bestow on me a few years ago. I feel that I have done my duty as a man who wishes to honour his word and respect his pledges and his declarations, who wishes to be able to walk with his head erect among the citizens