

The Address—Mr. Coldwell

army, in regard to industry, our resources, human and material, there should be a thorough appraisal of our resources, both human and material, in order that we might plan a really effective effort for our own defence, for the obligations that we have assumed in connection with other countries and for the defence of democracy across the world.

When we make such an appraisal we then can decide where our best contribution can be made. If war comes—and I do not think it is inevitable—it will be in Europe ultimately. Should we lose control of western Europe, which—if war came soon and with the defences that we are told are there—is a possibility, the industrial centres of Great Britain would be subjected to intense bombing and in all probability would be largely immobilized. Therefore, we have to consider what our best contribution would be under various circumstances that might arise.

We found of course that the raising of a large force suddenly in the autumn of 1939 was not very difficult, nor was the maintenance of industry, such as it was in 1939, difficult. Why? Because we had a very large amount of unemployment in the country. If my memory serves me, we had something like 400,000 people on relief at that time, and there was no strain on the economy at all in raising an army or in operating industry. As I believed then I believe now. I believed that a proper appraisal of our resources at that time would have guided us rather better than we were guided subsequently in the war that we declared in September, 1939. But in any event, whether one was right or wrong in that particular at that time, we are not at war at the moment. The government knows what obligations we are expected to assume; and it seems to me that the first step should be a thorough appraisal of our economic and human resources.

Because of the strain on the economy I want to say to the Prime Minister that I do not agree that the institution of price controls in the United States will be a sufficient safeguard for the standards of living of the Canadian people. The government will have to institute price controls.

The Prime Minister said that that could only be done if the people were in favour of it. Well, public opinion polls have shown in one instance that 75 per cent of the people interviewed were in favour of it. More recently, of course, rather smaller percentages have declared themselves in favour of the kind of controls suggested to them when they were asked the question a couple of months ago.

[Mr. Coldwell.]

But again may I say—and I want to bring this to your attention before I close—if we are to have intelligent price controls the government should call together the representatives of the groups who are mainly interested in these controls, namely, representatives of the farmers—

Mr. Ferrie: They don't want it.

Mr. Coldwell:—representatives of the workers, representatives of business and representatives of some consumer organizations. When I say "representatives of these organizations", I mean people chosen by these organizations at least in a consultative committee, and endeavour to see whether we cannot relate to some degree at least prices and wages so that we may get some intelligent workable controls to which all our people would agree, and which will enable us to carry the people along without the difficulty that the Prime Minister apprehended when he was speaking a short time ago.

After all, if we are to have satisfactory controls the groups mainly interested in them are entitled to consultations, and not only consultations in separate groups, but consultation together in order that they may understand the viewpoints of one another.

Of course a great deal has been made of wage control. As a matter of fact you have wage control now to a very large extent, because in many of the great trades unions wages have been agreed upon for one year ahead and two years ahead, and yet prices continue to rise. You have control now of the farmer's returns to a very large degree in setting floor prices on some of the goods that he produces and ceilings in some of the arrangements that have been made. The only people who are free to do exactly what they like are the manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers. They have obviously increased prices over the last couple of months in order that they may circumvent price controls if they come into effect.

I am not going to give examples which have come to my knowledge over the last two or three months, but I have been told by retailers in this city, who have been buying goods that they were accustomed to buying from various wholesale concerns, that the prices have been pushed up, as they believed, to an unwarranted extent in anticipation that we may have some measure of price control and we might do what the United States did, although we did not know what the United States was going to do until a little while ago, namely, stabilize prices at the highest level. That will not do. We may have to use methods including subsidies to bring down real buying prices to some extent.