

to avoid rather than to enforce the performance of a duty. It is not a declaration of faith; it is a declaration of impotence.

What is the position? The government knows better than anyone else the position in relation to man-power. It knows better than we can know that the maximum must be done and done quickly. This government knows the responsibility which we assumed when we declared for total war, when we sent men overseas, when we undertook to stand by them with adequate reserves and reinforcements. Now we propose to abandon these undertakings to the shadow of a plebiscite.

This government, by this lack of action, has failed these men and it knows it has failed them. History will hold it responsible if disaster comes. In effect, the government admits that we are not a united nation, and we are not a united nation because of commitments made by this government previous to March, 1940, based on the situation then existing, which has little no relation to the known facts of to-day—facts better known to the government than to any of us. And yet it will not move along the only honourable path open to it.

What are these commitments? Briefly, that we shall not have compulsory military service for overseas, in those theatres of war where the conflict is to be fought and won, or, God forbid, lost. The Prime Minister doubtless will argue that because he, unasked, made that commitment, he has a mandate from the people not to use compulsion for overseas service. That will, I assume, be his position. In fact, I believe he has so stated.

Let us examine this question of mandate. Did the Prime Minister, elected to power in 1935, have a mandate to declare war in 1939? Most assuredly he did not. Did the Prime Minister have a mandate from the people of Canada to adopt the principle of compulsion for military service in Canada in June 1940? Most assuredly he did not. Did the ministry have a mandate from the people to put a ceiling on prices at a time when the price level of agricultural products, for instance, was low and uneven? Most assuredly it did not. Did the ministry have a mandate—and I want hon. gentlemen to direct their attention to this, because we are going to meet with it sooner or later—to take from the war appropriation bill millions of dollars, perhaps hundreds of millions, voted by this parliament, taxed from the people of the country of all classes, poor and rich alike, to prosecute the war with the utmost vigour, and switch those hundreds of millions of dollars to the purposes of the new Commodity Prices Stabiliza-

tion corporation to help maintain the price ceiling on imports from abroad? Assuredly it did not.

I deny that the ministry had a mandate from the people against compulsory military service for overseas. It was not an issue. The Prime Minister himself made a pledge, which was accepted. He now seeks to be relieved from that pledge, but that is a very different thing from a mandate. If I interpret aright the vote of the last election, it was a mandate to prosecute the war—interpreted as moderate in some quarters, middle-of-the-road in others, but undoubtedly a mandate to prosecute the war.

We entered upon a leisurely prosecution of the war for the first nine months. There is no doubt about that. Then came the tragedy of Dunkirk, and things began to happen. The government under pressure stepped up the tempo of the war. We had the mobilization act, a long step forward, but with a limitation self-imposed by the ministry. It contained the very principle of compulsion which the Prime Minister has proclaimed against. The country accepted it without protest. It was the first real sign of leadership the country had been given. Now we have reached a time properly described in the speech from the throne as "the gravest crisis in the world's history", a time which demands the utmost effort, and instead of the situation being met man-fashion we are offered a plebiscite.

Could anything be more fantastic? Could anything be more futile? Let us examine this question of mandate a little further.

In 1916 Woodrow Wilson was elected President of the United States on a cry that he kept the nation out of war. I remember it, and so do you. Yet within twelve months he sent a strong, stirring message to congress, and the United States declared war on Germany. That is history. Did he have a mandate? Most assuredly he did not. He had a mandate to keep the nation out of war.

In 1938 Mr. Chamberlain, valiantly striving to preserve the peace of Europe, brought down in the British House of Commons, long before war came, but in anticipation of war, a measure designed to conscript the man-power of Britain. Previously he had vigorously opposed the idea. Did he have a mandate for that decision? Most assuredly he did not. His action in doing so was an outstanding illustration, however, of the application of the principles of responsible representative government.

In 1914 Sir Robert Borden gave an assurance to the British government that if war came his government was prepared to stand by Britain, and he immediately called parliament together to sanction his undertaking. He