

But the right to debate and discuss is ours already. What is wanted is full opportunity for interrogation and cross-examination. That cannot be done, I submit, in an ordinary debate on the address. It can be done properly only by having ministers appear before a special committee or committees, or at a round table conference. However, we welcome these declarations, and we shall take full advantage of the opportunities accorded us.

At this point may I direct the attention of hon. members of this house and of the public in general to the fact that to all intents and purposes we have not at this time full responsible government in Canada. As I look back on the work of the last session and on the legislation passed then I am conscious now, as perhaps I was not then, that we, the representatives of the people, have been forced to abdicate many of our functions. War is the excuse. We no longer legislate in the true sense of the word, because we have delegated to the government the power to legislate by order in council. In effect we have set up in Canada a totalitarian state as truly as they have it in Europe. The government even legislates by order in council, when parliament is in session. That ought not to be; it is wrong, and should cease. In one important sphere only has the House of Commons retained its hard-won power and authority. We have, at least, in theory, retained the right to vote supply and to levy taxation—but only under the will and at the direction of the executive. Everything else may be done by order in council.

What a situation, Mr. Speaker, to contemplate and reflect upon! And all this under a so-called Liberal administration, an administration led by a gentleman who throughout all his public life has been most vociferous in upholding the theory of the supremacy of parliament!

May I at this point direct the attention of hon. members to another speech from the throne, one to which we listened only a few days ago. I refer to the speech delivered by the deputy of his excellency when proroguing the last session of parliament. In that speech appears the following sentence:

The measures which you have taken here had in view the immediate task of sharing more completely in the defence of Britain and securing our own country more effectively against internal subversion and external attack.

Those words are significant. For the first time since Canada entered this great struggle, first things are put first. It is the first time the government has recognized the doctrine that the defence of Britain is first. I congratulate my right hon. friend on those words.

That is the principle which I and those associated with me in the house and throughout the country have valiantly sought to have recognized ever since the war began. To me it is fundamental; for Britain is the defender of democracy and civilization, the defender of our democracy and our civilization in this western hemisphere. For us, aid in the defence of Britain should be our first objective; the defence of our beloved country will follow.

The other day my learned and hon. friend the member for St. Lawrence-St. George (Mr. Claxton), in the very accomplished speech in moving the address in reply, referred to those who were "more English than the English". I thought there was a touch of sarcasm in that reference, because I assumed he meant myself and those associated with me. That may have been a reference to those in his majesty's loyal opposition who have never ceased to urge upon the government more and more aid to Britain. I say to my hon. friend that those associated with me on this side of the house are as good Canadians as are to be found anywhere else in the house. We all love Canada as we love our wives and children. I believe too, that love for Canada is not confined to hon. members on this side of the house. But those of us who are of united empire loyalist descent, and who have British blood in our veins, love Britain as we love our mothers. Shall we be ashamed of that?

May I ask the government, and particularly the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Ralston) who, I understand, is to speak shortly, what is the attitude of the government with respect to the supreme objective of Great Britain as announced by Mr. Churchill on more than one occasion recently? What about Mr. Churchill's proposal for 1942 and 1943 concerning the freeing of France and the low countries? What is Canada's attitude with respect to that matter? In Mr. Churchill's view, and I believe in the view of all of us, this war will not be won until Hitler, with all that he stands for, is crushed.

I make this inquiry of the Minister of National Defence for two reasons. Recently, while inspecting eastern defences in the city of Halifax, he gave an interview. There was nothing improper in that interview, but he indicated no commitments beyond those which the government has already undertaken. I believe we should be taking the long view with respect to the position in Europe. I grant that Mr. Churchill's vision with respect to the reestablishment of France and the low countries is a great and very important