

Mobilization Act—Mr. Roebuck

they gave to a "yes" vote, was not the meaning which was given to it by the Prime Minister. They told me by hundreds; they made it known to me in every way that masses can make their meaning clear, that they were voting "yes" on this plebiscite because they preferred the compulsory selective service system to the voluntary system. They were voting "yes" because they were in favour of conscription.

I am speaking only for myself. I am speaking only as member for Trinity. I would not presume to speak for other members or for other members' ridings. I know my people as well as most members know theirs, and I say that my electors did not vote in this plebiscite only and exclusively to set a government free from shackles of its own making, although I realize that that was an element in their thinking.

It has been contended that the government wished to be free from its commitments because it would then be in a better position to explain to the people of the United States why the United States has the draft and Canada has not. The importance of American relations is thoroughly understood, I think, by all well-informed Canadians, but I am safe in saying this to the house, that my electors of Trinity did not go to the polls by thousands in order to improve a speech or to sprinkle salt upon an argument. There were 26,295 electors in my riding who went to the polls—26,295 in my constituency alone—and they voted for the affirmative on the ballot by a vote of nine in ten.

Mr. FLEMING: Are you in favour of it, too?

Mr. ROEBUCK: Yes. Why did the people of my riding flock to the polls in such numbers? In my judgment they went for no other reason than to decide whether Canada should or should not have conscription. That may have been illogical on their part, in view of the form of the question as placed upon the ballot. But the electors were not the architects of that verbal structure; it was given to them; they had no choice but to accept it and make the best use they could of it in expressing their purpose. They may have been actually pig-headed in view of the speeches made by parliamentarians of all colours, but in my judgment that is what they did. And they are the masters. According to my intimate knowledge, they went to the polls to decide this question of conscription.

Mr. FLEMING: Did the hon. member advise them to vote for conscription?

Mr. ROEBUCK: I asked them to come out, and they came in great numbers. I am
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not saying whether they were wise or unwise, whether it was right or wrong. I am not defending my own position; I am simply saying what I think they did.

I wish the house would permit me to present the case and would sympathetically go along with me for a moment in trying to get the picture as it presents itself in my riding. Mine is a constituency of homes, thousands of them. The men and women whom I represent are home people. They love their families. No people in the world ever loved their families more than do the people of my constituency. Yet young men and women went to the polls and said, "Take our brothers and our fathers." Fathers and mothers went to the polls and said, "Take our sons." They hate war and they do not love compulsion; yet they said, "Take us; save Canada; beat Hitler." They said it with sore hearts, in no spirit of bravado. In sombre seriousness they said it. They are Canadians; they did their duty.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to inform the hon. gentleman that his time has expired.

Mr. ROEBUCK: Unless I have the indulgence of the house I must bow to your ruling.

Mr. SPEAKER: There is some objection.

Mr. T. L. CHURCH (Broadview): The motion is for the second reading of Bill No. 80, a bill which has been a costly one for the taxpayers of this country. It is a pretty skimpy bill to cost \$1,500,000 to release someone who says he gave a pledge. As far as I am concerned as a member of the House of Commons and of the party to which I belong I never gave a pledge on anything, and I can say that no leader had the right to pledge my political party on that question because the party was never consulted about it. That is what defeated our party in Ontario, the principle of "follow your leader" and "your leader is your policy". That policy is fatal in peace and still more so in time of war.

Every second, every minute, every hour, every day and every week between now and midsummer are big with fate for this country. As we approach the summer we do not know to whom this country is going to belong. The enemy is at our door, our front door, our back door and every other door. It has attacked three dominions; three of them have the enemy at their front doors. This is going to be the most fateful summer in our history; yet nearly six months have been wasted by a plebiscite which meant nothing from the start. All this bill does is to