

War—Participation of Canada

It has not been easy for the allied forces to realign their forces and to devise new tactics to meet the unexpectedly rapid advance, but they are straining every effort. The British and French forces have done brave and effective work in attacking enemy bases and lines of communication. The morale of the French armies is unbroken, and the appointment of Marshal Petain and Marshal Weygand to the supreme direction has given new confidence. M. Reynaud, in his frank and courageous address to-day, declares, "These two great peoples, two great empires, cannot be defeated. France cannot die." This is the true voice of France. It is equally the voice of Britain and of the entire British commonwealth of nations.

The situation as it apparently exists at the front is changing from hour to hour, aye even from minute to minute. In this, probably one of the darkest hours in the history of our country and empire, we can, however, all take some consolation by reminding ourselves of the past. The Germans were at the gates of Amiens, and the British army separated from the French army, in March, 1918. The hour was grave indeed, yet no one thought of giving up the struggle. Then, thanks to the resiliency and buoyancy of the French character and temperament and the dogged determination and persistence of the British, the line was reformed, reestablished and held, and finally the victory was that of the allied powers.

That is all the information I am in a position to give the house at the moment.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I desire to thank the Prime Minister. I hope he will continue this practice of letting the house and the country know the worst or the best.

INQUIRY AS TO STATEMENT BY DEFENCE MINISTER
ON CANADA'S PARTICIPATION

Hon. GROTE STIRLING (Yale): May I rise on a question of order to ask the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Rogers) if it is his intention to make a statement on Canada's participation in the war, and if he will do so at the resolution stage of the war appropriation measure so that in subsequent stages of the discussion we may be the better informed?

Hon. NORMAN McL. ROGERS (Minister of National Defence): I may say to my hon. friend that it had been my intention to speak while the resolution standing in the name of my colleague the Minister of Finance was under discussion, and I shall be very glad indeed to do so.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

WAR APPROPRIATION BILL

PROCEDURE IN REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE OR
COMMITTEES FOLLOWING SECOND READING

Hon. R. B. HANSON (Leader of the Opposition): If I am in order I should like to ask the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) if he will be good enough to clarify what he had in mind yesterday when he was referring to the proposal which he then made that after a general debate on the resolution to provide the moneys required to support Canada's war effort the appropriation bill would be referred to a committee or committees of the house. If the Prime Minister will refer to page 49 of yesterday's *Hansard* he will see the passages to which I have reference. Perhaps in order to clarify my question I might take the time to read them:

There should be a general debate on the resolution. We can then refer the appropriation bill to a committee or committees of the House of Commons in order that there may be disclosed to the members of those committees information which would not probably be in the public interest to place on the pages of *Hansard* or to broadcast in debate to the House of Commons.

Further on he made this observation:

I should like to emphasize that the setting up of these committees will not preclude in any way any member from debating any subject to which he may desire to call the attention of the house and the country, and I give my assurance to hon. members that the constitution of such committees will not be used as a pretext for concealing any information which it is in the public interest to disclose.

I have studied those two statements very carefully and they appear to me to be inconsistent. Reading the first statement by itself without reference to the second it would appear that the intention is to refer the appropriation bill to a select committee of the house, on which we shall be represented, and that there will then be disclosed information which the government may declare that it is not in the public interest to place on *Hansard* or debate in the house. That of course, if agreed to, and if we participate, would tie our hands and preclude us forever from using information so disclosed, whether or not we agreed with respect to the principle of public interest. On the other hand the second statement emphasizes the view that the setting up of a special committee or committees will not in any way preclude any hon. member, including I assume any member of the committee or committees, from debating any subject to which he may desire to call the attention of the house and the country.

If the information, or some of the information, given to this committee, is of such a character that it would not be in the public