

Mr. Chamberlain, in England, had stated in February or March, that he would not impose conscription in time of peace. Two or three months later, it was imposed.

If we adopt a policy of participation, as I said, it will lead us to conscription if war goes on for a long time.

Why should we not remain neutral? We would thus take the same course that was taken by the United States, our neighbour, a country of America like our own, whose interests are about similar to ours and which has adopted a policy of neutrality. Can it be that the United States are wrong in remaining neutral? Who could claim that they are? The principles of civilization and liberty are just as dear to the Americans as they are to us. One after the other, the countries of South America have taken the same course. Southern Ireland, a member of the commonwealth like Canada, but quite near the seat of warfare, remains neutral; why should we not, separated as we are by an ocean from the scene of the conflict? South Africa merely gives moral support.

Why should we not adopt a policy which would keep us out of conflicts, as in the case of Belgium, Holland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Finland, and so forth?

Let us compare the geographic situation of those countries with our own. We are far, far away, while they are quite near. All these countries with a democratic form of government treasure their governmental institutions just as much as any other nation, they love liberty just as much and are just as anxious to preserve it as any other country; yet, they remain neutral. Are they unfaithful to their duty in declaring their neutrality? Who would dare say so? They are protecting their liberty by remaining neutral. Being free countries, they simply act according to their interests like the nations which are waging war.

But the difference between them and ourselves is that they are not seeking instructions in London, they are governed by their own interests.

As a sovereign and free nation, were we to consider nothing but our own interests, our attitude in the present conflict should be determined independently from England's policy. And my stand on this matter is based on what the Prime Minister himself said in this house, May 24, 1938:

No two countries have the same neighbours, the same relationships; no two countries can have the same questions to deal with, the same policies for their solution. Argentina and Finland, China and Switzerland, have widely different preoccupations. . . .

And so, even in times of world disturbance, the policies of no two countries can be alike,

provided they are rooted in their own interests or the ideals in which their interests are sublimated and are not merely echoes of the policies of other countries.

Is that clear enough?

The interests of European nations are not the interests of American countries.

The interests of Poland in Europe are not the interests of Canada in America; neither are the interests of England in Europe similar to the interests of Canada in America.

And all the more reason why we should declare ourselves neutral when democratic countries in Europe are doing so.

Now is the time to put into practice the words of Lord Tweedsmuir: "A Canadian owes his first loyalty to Canada."

Our friendly feelings towards Britain, France and Poland are one thing, the realities of life are another.

Our duty is to protect Canada against the consequences of participation in a European war.

Who could claim that Canada would not be risking greater harm to her children, to her worldly possessions, by taking part in the war than by keeping out of the conflict just as the United States and others are doing? Let us recall the words which the Prime Minister uttered on May 24, 1938:

. . . We should find no cause for fear in our isolation, if we consider ourselves alone.

Instead of going off to fight for the security of Poland's vulnerable and distant frontiers, let us adopt, in common with other countries, a policy of neutrality.

Let it be a friendly neutrality toward Great Britain, France and Poland, supplying them with the necessary food products they require and the basic materials essential for their economic activities.

During the great war, the Allies obtained from the rest of the world their needed requirements in war material and food supplies; trade statistics are there to show it.

Even the Reich could not have carried on until 1918 without Scandinavian ores.

Let us therefore declare neutrality. Our geographical position warrants it; our economic conditions make it imperative and our own interest makes it a duty. I take for granted that when the Prime Minister stated that parliament would decide, he had in mind a free parliament, for it would otherwise not be the expression of the will of parliament and there would be no reason to consult it. That would no longer be democracy but dictatorship, and it is against dictatorship that we are asked to fight.

Now I appeal to this free parliament, according to the wish expressed by the Prime