

How much more will the lords of the admiralty, encouraged by circumstances and events, be tempted to play upon Canadian feelings when our country is so prepared as to be able to give a contribution more in keeping with their requirements. Now is the time to give them a warning.

Some might think that the importance of this debate is being overexaggerated. I would vote as willingly as anyone the millions which are requested if we had not such a heavy national debt, if we had a larger population to take care of taxes, and if work were more plentiful.

Why should Canada, at a time when she envisions a brighter future, when she is recovering her faith in her destinies thanks to an essentially Canadian policy, why should our country be halted on her triumphal march against economic and financial difficulties? Why should a war threat, originating not here but outside, introduce feelings of uneasiness and uncertainty about the future, into her now confident mind. She needs all her strength, all her energy if she is to win an ultimate victory, and emerge from the chaos of the post-war depression. Let those who are in favour of armaments and war carry on, if they wish, their unending quarrels. As for us, we want peace and we wish they would let us work peacefully towards securing unity and prosperity for the Canadian people. Many years ago, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald said in an address delivered before the American congress: "We are all overarmed."

Personally, I believe that this debate and this vote are of the utmost importance and if I am taking such a stand on this question, the reason is that I have somewhat studied the history of European and many other countries. I have witnessed, as everyone has, the mournful events that have occurred since 1914 and if the same thing is to happen again, I want my vote to result neither directly nor indirectly in the participation of Canadian men in a war that would be none of our concern.

Mr. LACOMBE: Hear, hear!

Mr. GAUTHIER: I do not presume, Mr. Speaker, to think that my vote may prevent war or my country's participation in a foreign war. Others in this house voted against conscription, which was nevertheless passed by parliament.

But they availed themselves, as I am doing now, of the right to state frankly their views, and their names have not been banished from the minds of their compatriots as if they had betrayed their country.

[Mr. Gauthier.]

But war has not broken out, and I might be told to wait before passing judgment. I am waiting, Mr. Speaker, trying meanwhile to secure information about the opinions that are being entertained within the empire, in view of the so urgent need of armaments. On the 7th instant, the following statement—reported by the Canadian Press in cooperation with the Havas agency—appeared in the London Sunday Times:

Possibility of the dominions sharing expenses of the new rearmament program.

The dominions, the paper says, "could not, for example, continue to enjoy the priceless advantage of her fleet protection if they allowed Great Britain to be crushed through the air, British rearmament is at present a heavy charge on the taxpayer, the contribution now being four times that of 1914, when Great Britain already had the highest tax rate in the world.

"The burden of armaments will be far heavier than in any period of peace in our history. The line of security is to survey and utilize as far as possible the resources of the whole empire for the empire's defence."

Such is the opinion put forward by a London paper, and at this time when all nations of the British Commonwealth are arming, the writer believes, so it seems, that when England launches a program of armaments, Canada and the other parts of the empire should follow suit.

In a recent article published in the Montreal Star, we could read the following:

(Text) The French Canadians are not alone in asking to be shown that they should fight in any particular war. That is the attitude of all the people in this hemisphere. When the Great war broke suddenly on the world in August, 1914, Canada prepared with splendid promptness to send an expeditionary force. Her leader knew that they simply must do it—that it was literally a matter of life or death, but her people did not. Eighty-five per cent of the first regiments that sailed for Salisbury Plain were old countrymen. What did this very significant circumstance show? Clearly that the old countrymen resident in Canada responded automatically to the call when the flag went under fire. That is the European psychology. But the Canadians took time to look into the situation and think it over. When they were convinced that it was their fight they responded nobly—but not until they were convinced. French Canada as a whole was never convinced. Many French Canadians were, however, and many of them went and died gallantly on the field of battle.

But the Canadians took time to look into the situation and think it over. When they were convinced that it was their fight they responded nobly, but not until they were convinced.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that they should never be convinced to go abroad, and in doing my utmost to convince them, should an external war break out in the future, to stay