

881875

C 273169

placing on the people the responsibility of deciding the issue of conscription, instead of assuming that responsibility itself, and making its own recommendation to parliament.

It has now been made clear that conscription is not the issue. Let me emphasize that fact. Those who tell you that conscription is the issue are misleading you. The sole purpose of the plebiscite is to obtain for the government, and for parliament, a perfectly free hand in dealing with this, as with all other questions. All you are being asked to say is whether or not you are in favour of the government's hands being perfectly free at this time of war. That is the meaning of the question to which you are being asked to reply YES or NO. If you reply YES, you will not be committing the government to conscription for service overseas; but you will be enabling the government and parliament to discuss and decide that question solely on its merits. Members of the government and members of parliament will no longer be suspected of being influenced in their judgment by political or other considerations arising out of promises or pledges which have been given in the past.

World Situation Exceedingly Critical

When I spoke to you on April 7, I said that I would not be true to the trust the people of Canada had reposed in me, did I not say that I believed the situation, for all free nations, was far more critical than it had ever been. I added that Canada's position was no exception. I said then, and I wish to repeat to-night, that I have never been an alarmist. Throughout my public life, where I believed the situation required it, I have always tried to measure my words, to speak with moderation, and only after careful reflection. I never spoke with a fuller consciousness of the meaning and weight of my words than I did when I told you how very critical is the situation which faces the free nations to-day.

Nothing has surprised me more than that this statement has been called into question by some of those who are urging you to vote NO on Monday next. They accuse me of exaggerating the danger. They say that I do not really believe the enemy has any designs on Canada. They say, for example, that Mr. King knows that it is scarcely possible that the British Empire and the United States, allied with Russia and with so many other countries, could find themselves in a desperate situation.

Now that is precisely what I did say, and it is precisely what I meant to say, because I believe it to be true. I do not believe that the United Nations are going to be defeated, if each and all of them put forth their utmost effort. But I do believe it is possible for them to be defeated, unless they put forth their utmost effort. I believe it is my duty to tell you this quite frankly. There is nothing

to be gained by pretending that the danger to us all is not great. Nothing could be more harmful than to encourage the people to believe that it is impossible for the enemy to win. Those who tell you such things refuse to face the truth.

Canada Liable to Attack

The persons who have thus been questioning my statement have not stopped there. They have gone on to say that, even if I were right as to the danger, the enemy would not attack Canada, even if he were victorious. Why, with Russia defeated, with England at their mercy, with the whole European continent at their feet, with the immense resources of the Middle East available, with the United States exposed to their attacks, why, they ask, should the Nazis attack Canada? Looking across the Pacific, they ask, why with the whole of India, Malaya and the East Indies to possess, with the almost empty continent of Australia to occupy, why should the Japanese attempt to come and instal themselves in California, in Oregon or in British Columbia? They say that Mr. King has too good judgment to believe in these dangers; that they are, in fact, unbelievable. They say that other countries are as large and much richer, or more accessible and empty, or more desirable and easier to defend than Canada. They conclude that I am knowingly exaggerating the danger to our country.

I do not believe I am exaggerating. If I did not believe it to be true, what possible motive could I have for saying that a world encircling danger may yet jeopardize the very existence of our country.

The fact that any persons could think that Canada is not liable to attack shows how little they realize how greatly conditions have changed as a result of the war. So thought most of the peoples of Europe about their countries at the beginning of the war; so, until a few months ago, thought the people of the United States; so, until a few weeks ago, thought the peoples of Australia, New Zealand and India. None of them seemed to perceive the enemy's plan of world conquest.

The Enemy Not to be Trusted

When those who tell you to vote NO say that no sensible man would wish to believe such stories or yield to such terrors, they are clearly attempting to suggest that no serious danger exists. They thereby foster a false sense of security. When they say, as they have said, that one may question whether Canada could withstand invasion, if Russia, the United States and England cannot remove this danger, they are, in effect, saying that Canada should let other nations win the war for Canada. Let me ask what the fate of