

*The Address—Mr. Hanson (York-Sunbury)*

The speech from the throne states that we will be advised of the —

. . . means the government proposes to adopt, to effect as complete as possible a mobilization of the material resources and man-power of the country in direct furtherance of a total national effort.

Presumably this is in fulfilment of the statement made by the Minister of National Defence for Air on December 13, when he said:

These powers—

That is, those under the National Resources Mobilization Act—

—we propose to use in this emergency which confronts us, and in an endeavour to see to it that every man and woman in this country carries on the work which will be of the greatest possible benefit to the state as a whole.

If these announcements are carried out in their literal interpretation, the results will be welcomed by the country. Unfortunately there is too much ground for believing that there is in these statements little more than a pious expression of opinion. The statements do not differ from statements which were made by the Minister of National Defence for Air at the time the mobilization act was passed. Speaking in the House of Commons on June 18, 1940, as reported at page 862 of Hansard, with reference to the mobilization act, the Minister of National Defence for Air said:

It should be said that anyone who is physically fit and is below the age of 45 years may, and in fact will, have not only the opportunity but the obligation to join the militia service of Canada.

In a national broadcast on July 10, 1940, in which he was explaining the principles of the mobilization act, the Minister of National Defence for Air spoke as follows:

Every able-bodied man must be and will be trained in the use of arms to defend his home, his loved ones, his liberty, his life.

From these latter two statements of policy came the farce of the thirty-day training plan. Instead of every able-bodied man being trained in the use of arms, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three and twenty-four-year-olds were given elementary training and then posted to the reserve units where many of them probably have been lost sight of. Only 15,000 have been retained in the army, to be used in accordance with the limitation of the mobilization act, solely for the defence of Canada, within Canada.

The only criterion we have of the government's sincerity with regard to its proposals for the future is the means by which it has carried out similar pledges in the past. Must we assume that the policy enunciated in the speech from the throne will be fulfilled only to the same extent as the policy announced by the Minister of National Defence for Air in connection with the mobilization act?

[Mr. R. B. Hanson.]

I turn now to the question of a plebiscite.

Let me say at the outset that the loyal people of Canada will and do feel deeply humiliated by the declaration that we are to hold a plebiscite to ascertain if the people will relieve the ministry and, in particular, the Prime Minister, from the position in which he finds himself and which he took prior to the last election, by his own volition and initiative.

We are, in the words of Premier Bracken, to have "this crowning indignity". We are to be asked to take money needed for the war and spend it in order to relieve our elected representatives from a responsibility that goes with responsible government.

I wish to mention in passing the words of Premier Hepburn of Ontario. They speak for themselves:

One of the most dastardly, contemptible and cowardly things ever perpetrated on a dignified and respected country by any government.

Those are not my words. They are the words of a man who helped put the right hon. gentleman opposite into power.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

An hon. MEMBER: When?

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): In 1935; and let me add that a good many hon. members also are here by reason of that fact.

Some hon. MEMBERS: No, no.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I am sorry; it is true just the same. My own view is that, "at this time of gravest crisis in the world's history"—to use the words of the speech from the throne—the course suggested by the government is the greatest exhibition of lack of national leadership this country has ever witnessed. It is a master-stroke of bad publicity for Canada among the allied nations. As one newspaper has said, "never were so many people humiliated by so few."

It is a deliberate attempt to evade responsibility and save the face of the ministry, and particularly the face of the Prime Minister. It is the negation of responsible government as we know it and practise it.

We cannot win this war by a plebiscite. Germany does not carry on war by plebiscites. The first function of government is to secure the safety of the state, and the government that fails in that duty commits the cardinal, the unpardonable sin. Let this government rise to the level of its duty; let it not be afraid to lead. A plebiscite is not a policy; it is the negation, it is the avoidance of a policy. It is merely an unworthy expedient to avoid facing a vital issue. Its purpose is to avoid rather than to face responsibility; it is