

That has been the policy of every imperial conference, namely, that the first duty of each part of the empire was its own local defence; having secured its own local defences, it would be in a position the more effectively to cooperate with the other parts of the empire in any effort against a common foe. That is the policy we have pursued from the beginning, the policy that we are pursuing to-day, and the policy that we intend to pursue so long as we are responsible for the administration of Canada's war effort.

I noticed my hon. friend contradicted himself a little before he got through. It was not his only contradiction. He referred with some concern to the situation on the Pacific. Really, according to his reasoning I do not see why we should be concerned about the Pacific if our main concern at this time is to be in England. The Pacific is even farther away than the Atlantic. The truth of the matter is that we are deeply concerned with the defence of the coasts of Canada both on the Atlantic and on the Pacific, and have been regarding both with the utmost care and concern during the period that we have had responsibility.

I pass now to what my hon. friend had to say about discussions in parliament. That was the next subject to which he referred. He suggested that there again the government and I in particular were going back on a principle for which we had stood and which we had advocated very strongly in past years, a principle which my hon. friend regards as all important, namely, the supremacy of parliament. I agree with my hon. friend entirely that no principle is more important than that of the supremacy of parliament. But where my hon. friend errs is that he mistakes the supremacy of the opposition for the supremacy of parliament. Analyse his words and you will see that this is what they come to. He complains that we have been legislating by order in council during the period of the war. Where did we get the authority to legislate by order in council with respect to war measures but from this Canadian parliament? If we do not exercise that power in the light of our responsibility as viewed by hon. members of this parliament, the power that gave us that authority can take it away and will take it away. And that power is the supremacy of parliament. But each time my hon. friend speaks he seems to feel that he is parliament—he and the group that sit about him—and that because he and his followers are outnumbered by others in this house, therefore parliament is not supreme. I look upon the parliament that has been sent here fresh from the people of Canada as the parliament the people desire

to carry on the business of the country. The people have designated in the representatives here assembled those whom they consider best able to give expression to their will at the present time. The gentlemen who have received that responsibility and trust are all assembled within the walls of this building and they are supreme; and their supremacy is at all times the supremacy of the majority in this house. This government will at all times bow to the will of that majority. So long as we have that majority behind us we intend to act in the light of the responsibility which is ours, a responsibility we owe to the majority, and through the majority to the people. The moment our actions cease to command the confidence of the majority in this House of Commons, that moment we shall be the first to submit our resignations and to let others take our place.

May I pass now to the next subject discussed by the leader of the opposition. It had reference to the conduct of public business here. My hon. friend rather dramatically rededicated the Conservative party to the public service. I must say that, after the name which the party gave itself in the last election, and under which it ran, it needed rededication. My hon. friend did himself and the party and his friends a good turn when he laid emphasis anew on the word "Conservative". It is a much more congenial designation than "Union government", the name under which most of those directly opposite me were returned to the House of Commons.

My hon. friend made a statement of the policy of his party as it would be at this session. I wish to thank him for that statement. It is one which I think does both him and the party credit, and if he can only hold to it I do not think there will be much difference between us during the session. In that statement my hon. friend undertook to cooperate with the government in its war effort, to be constructive in his criticism of that effort, to reserve to himself the right to discuss any of the matters pertaining to the business of the country as they might be considered in time of peace, and generally speaking to further as far as possible the interests of all at this very critical time. That was a good statement and I hope my hon. friend and those associated with him will be able to live up to it throughout the session.

My hon. friend says he does not intend to be a rubber stamp. I would not wish him to be, but may I say that that is the role that most minorities play in national governments, and I hope we shall not find on any side a desire for a step that will lead to rubber stamping at this particular time.