

by Canada, but to give Canada freedom of choice; and the series of events which I have recounted this evening makes it abundantly clear that we cannot risk the welfare of this country or of the people who inhabit it to governments over which we have no control, and who may follow policies which are against the best interests not only of Canada, not only of the British empire, but of the entire world.

Then, of course, at the conclusion of the events of last September we had the laudatory wire which the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Mackenzie King) sent to Mr. Chamberlain congratulating him upon his achievement.

The group with which I have the honour to be associated in this house has endeavoured again and again to warn this country against the danger of following blindly the foreign policy personified by Mr. Chamberlain. We have demanded that before we be called upon to vote money for armaments, we should know the policy which made those armaments necessary. Year after year we have stated that from our places here and asked for a direct statement regarding foreign policy. On April 1 of last year I myself said, as reported at page 1935 of *Hansard*:

I think it is my duty to urge that we tell them—

That is the people of Great Britain.

—in no uncertain terms, that we shall not stand for the type of policy which has been pursued and which I believe will eventually bring about the loss of democracy throughout a large part of the world. For these policies we in Canada must assume no responsibility. However, due to the breakdown of the League of Nations, we are compelled to consider some measures of defensive rearmament. To that, in so far as they are defensive, we in this group offer no objection; for the international scene has changed and for the worse since last year.

I said then it seemed to me that the nations were faced with two alternatives, either for members of the league to go to Geneva and declare that they would use every means in their power to resist aggression against Czechoslovakia or any of the smaller nations so threatened, or else drift steadily to war. Then, as now, I believed that the only way out is the marshaling of world opinion in defence of our democratic institutions. I did not believe then, and I do not believe now, that such action would have led to war. Such action, however, was not taken, and to-day huge sums are being spent in Canada and in every other country to prepare for war—war in Europe, and a war with the southeastern bastions of democracy already fallen into the hands of Hitler.

[Mr. Coldwell.]

The recent history of world events has shown that the foreign policy of the British national government which Canada follows is based purely upon the preservation of the economic interests of the powerful group which controls the British government. In the event of such a policy resulting in war, I contend that Canada should have the right to decide what she will do.

Mr. MARTIN: We have that now.

Mr. COLDWELL: The hon. member says that we have that right, but the weight of constitutional opinion is, I believe, against him.

It seems to me that the first requisite for our assistance should be the rebuilding of the League of Nations, based upon social and economic justice, and capable of guaranteeing the security of states that were loyal to their obligations as members of the league. This demands an immediate world conference to which, in my opinion, the United States—yes, and even the fascist powers—should be invited. Its objects should be (1) the establishment of a court of international justice or the reestablishment of the international court of justice to settle the outstanding difficulties that confront the nations of the world; for I recognize that the have-not nations, as we call them, have some legitimate grievances, and that makes our position rather more difficult than it might otherwise have been; and (2) collective disarmament, and the establishment of an international police force to maintain order.

It will be argued, of course, that under present world conditions such proposals are purely idealistic, but what alternative is there? I believe that if the moral and peaceful forces of the world decided jointly to outlaw aggressor states, they could be brought to their senses still, by economic pressure, not trading with them, and so forth. Some will say that this would involve suffering on the part of masses of the people in the aggressor countries, but such suffering would be negligible in comparison with the terrors of war.

Canada, as a small North American nation connected with the league, could do much to bring this about by indicating our stand clearly to the British people. They must be made to realize that unless and until they choose a government which is loyal to democratic principles and social justice, this country will not allow itself to be embroiled in a war fought to defend great economic interests. In any event they should be told that in the

event of any war Canada's maximum contribution would be the supplying of foodstuffs and material, and that, as has already been indicated, under no circumstances would conscription be instituted to provide an expeditionary force overseas.

Events have shown conclusively that the present government of Great Britain will not take a stand for democracy, but will take some stand only when their own particular interests are involved or threatened. They hoped throughout the years to compromise with the fascist powers. They now recognize they have failed, and so to-night war is being considered as a possibility. The irony of it all is this, that to-day, according to the papers, the British government has entered into some agreement with France for the defence or the guaranteeing of the boundaries of Poland—Poland, which six months ago was one of the nations that sought to partition Czechoslovakia, and which, moreover, is not democratic like Czechoslovakia was, but is under one of the worst dictatorships in Europe, and has been so since almost the close of the world war. It is futile, it seems to me, even to hope that a war conducted by the gentlemen who control British and French policy to-day will serve the cause of the common people. The first requisite, if we are to have any confidence in what they are about to do, is the establishment of governments which place first in their domestic and international policies the ideals of social and economic justice.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe) in his able speech this afternoon referred to the League of Nations, and added that we should do our bit to see that no great war takes place. I agree with him. It was that thought which provoked us some ten days ago to do our bit to prevent the developing situation by suggesting a meeting of the League of Nations to which the United States and the fascist states might be invited. We must revive collective security some time; for without it there can be no security for any nation, particularly small nations. We must banish from the earth those powerful economic and social interests and their political representatives that have temporarily destroyed collective security. The danger which confronts us now is that we shall face a war actively led by those who have betrayed and destroyed democracy and collective security because of what they believed to be their economic or their class interests. We should make it abundantly clear that we demand the reestablishment of democracy and of a collective peace system, not a collective war service. The first step must be that the British and French peoples clean their

houses of those who have destroyed their faith in both democracy and collective security. Then, I submit, and then only should we be prepared to lend our assistance in the prosecution of a struggle; for without such an assurance we should find ourselves more securely chained to the wheels of a victorious plutocracy, because I believe that when war comes, democracy goes out.

I agree with the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Thorson) when he said to-night that the most sacred duty of a leader to his people is the safeguarding of his nation against war. I agree, and because I agree I want to say to this house this evening that the desertion of the ideals of collective security and of peace has brought us to-night to the very brink of war. We should not sacrifice our boys as a living and a lively sacrifice to the interests of a group which has placed its interest above those of the security and the peace of mankind.

Before I sit down I should like to ask the Prime Minister a question. In to-day's papers we are told that the Canadian high commissioner in London, Mr. Massey, in common with the other dominion high commissioners, has been consulted regarding the international situation. In view of the reported guarantee to Poland, and the definite statement made by the Prime Minister yesterday, as reported at page 2612 of *Hansard*:

Speaking as the Prime Minister of Canada, I wish to say that I am not prepared any more than is the prime minister of Great Britain to engage this country by new and unspecified commitments operating under conditions which cannot now be foreseen.

As the Prime Minister of Great Britain has since yesterday, it would appear from the dispatches and from the press report of his own speech, given certain commitments; as the high commissioners of the dominion have been consulted, and as Mr. Massey's name has been mentioned in connection with these consultations, I would therefore, in view of the gravity of the situation ask the Prime Minister if he cares to say anything regarding these reports.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Answering my hon. friend, I would say that the word "consultation" as used in the dispatch is not, I think, correct. The high commissioner for Canada was called in with other high commissioners to meet the Secretary of State for the Dominions, who, I understand, gave information to the high commissioners of a character similar to the information which was given in dispatches to the government here.