

## QUEBEC AND CONSCRIPTION.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The brief time that I have at my disposal forces me to set forth certain facts very briefly, without developing them as I would like. These facts, I intend to discuss frankly, hoping that you will not reject lightly the arguments that I intend to put forward.

More than ever today, it cannot be denied, we have need of carefully reflection, of carefully avoiding any such violent language as would have the inevitable result of making things worse.

I want to talk to you of the attitude of Quebec toward conscriptions. If by any chance, I arrive at certain conclusions that you may consider severe, I will ask you to excuse me and to remember that we have been subjected for far too long, to false representations, and that the time has come to bring a little order into our thinking.

First of all, let us look at the facts. Despite all the noise of hate and discord that we hear, it cannot be denied that the regime under which Quebec has lived since Confederation has been largely profitable to us. I do not say that we have not had to fight for our rights, but I say that the Constitution, by giving us the weapons with which to defend ourselves, has been the guardian of our rights. It is quite understood of course, and I stress this point, that we have enjoyed our rights only to the extent to which we have been ready and willing to fight for them, and insofar as the Federal government did not override the Constitution in order to deny us these rights. There have been times when our so-called political defenders lacked the courage to stand up to the centralisers in Ottawa, and in consequence we have lost some of the rights that were essential to the free development of our province. But, I repeat, the Constitution has been for us a real source of benefit, and only exalted extremists can deny that fact.

Now, just as the Constitution recognises certain rights as belonging to the Provinces, it also recognises certain others as belonging to the Federal authority. One of the functions accorded to the latter, is the defence of the country. It is up to the Federal authority to judge by what means and under what circumstances, the country must be defended.

This brings me to the point, that the Federal government, with due respect for the conditions imposed by the Constitution, has the right to declare war and, from the moment that war has been declared, every single citizen of the country is, by that very fact, at war.

There has been a great deal of discussion as to whether Canada is at war when Britain is at war. That discussion came to an end in 1939.

On September 2, His Majesty the King spoke by radio, in order to warn all his subjects that a state of war existed between them and Germany. At that moment, there was a definite state of war, if we may believe the testimony of Winston Churchill, and if we refer to the Address from the Throne at the Session of 1939, which noted the same fact.

But the King government was not satisfied with that declaration, it wanted Canada to make her own declaration of war against Germany; it was the late Ernest Lapointe who signed the declaration of war in the name of Canada.

Do not fail to note, and this is of the greatest importance, for us in Quebec, that parliament voted that declaration of war unanimously.

We should not be surprised at that. It has always been the policy of the country, to stand shoulder to shoulder with Britain, in peace and in war. If I had the time I could remind you of the policy followed by John Macdonald, Cartier, Baldwin, Lafontaine, Tupper, Borden and even Laurier. One after another, with sundry variations to that policy, they followed it in its main essentials.

This continuous policy is easy to understand. In order to develop freely, Canada has to join her interests with those of Britain. If to that we add the fact that His Majesty is at the same time King of Great Britain and King of Canada, it is easy to understand that our country is under an obligation to defend its own interests simultaneously with those of Britain and the British Empire, since these interests are so intimately united.