

King), and also to the well prepared speech of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Hanson), and closing my eyes I could call to memory the words and arguments presented in parliament in 1917 when Sir Robert Borden and Mr. Meighen introduced their legislation for conscription. There was no difference. The same arguments that I heard in 1917 have been offered in this house by the Prime Minister and by the Leader of the Opposition. No difference—no change! History repeats itself. As in those days, not a scintilla of evidence has been produced to show the necessity of having recourse to such a measure at the present time—not one word. On the contrary we have still before us the declaration of the Prime Minister and of the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Ralston) that the voluntary system is working sufficiently well and meeting the needs of the present.

It reminded me also of something which is sadder to my soul. I remember having taken part in a by-election around 1916 or 1917 in which a Conservative candidate was offering himself to the electors in one of the Quebec district constituencies. Relying on the promises that had been made by the Prime Minister of the day, Sir Robert Borden, that he would not have recourse to conscription, that the voluntary system would be the only system he would adopt for prosecuting the war, this candidate said to his electors, "You see, gentlemen, in what position you are placed. You have the guarantee of the Prime Minister of to-day that you are not going to have conscription from the Conservative party. Beware," said he, "lest you might have conscription from the Liberal party if you turn your back on Sir Robert Borden at the present time."

It is to my sorrow that the principle of compulsory military service for overseas has been presented in this house by the Liberal party and by my leader. The bill that is now before the house embodies the principle of conscription for overseas service. We already have, we were told yesterday, the principle of conscription, in the mobilization act, except for service overseas. I remember very clearly the speeches that were delivered in this house when that law was being enacted. I remember what I said myself with the authority of all the members of the government. I remember very well what the late Right Hon. Ernest Lapointe said to those who were opposing the adoption of that law. He said that we would never resort to conscription for service overseas. But the amendment that is

now being introduced has the effect of establishing conscription for overseas service, though there is no present necessity for such action. Not a particle of evidence has been given to indicate that it is necessary for parliament to adopt such a measure at the present time.

Let no one be mistaken as to the situation. When clause 3 of the bill is deleted we shall have on the statute books of Canada compulsory military service for anywhere in the world, or any theatre of war in the world. It is not to be put into effect by act of parliament, as it was in 1917, with the regulations attached to the bill and presented to parliament. No; it is to be done by order in council, and it may very well be that the order in council applying conscription, forcing the boys of Canada to fight anywhere in the world will be kept secret. That is provided for in the law, by section 5 of the mobilization act, as it now stands.

Let no hon. member be deceived as to the consequences of the vote that he will give on this measure. Let him not be led astray by what is being said. It is said, there is no necessity for conscription now; and that we do not need conscription at the present time; but only the power to apply it. That is the line of argument which is being very much used in the province of Quebec. They have been trying to appease public opinion there by saying during the past three weeks through the newspapers and radio: "Do not worry; do not be afraid; you are not going to be conscripted; the law which is going to be placed on the statute book is not going to be applied; it is only a gesture made for the purpose of appeasing certain people in other sections of the country."

This is the last opportunity, Mr. Speaker, that the parliament of Canada will have of expressing its will on the principle of conscription for overseas service. There will be no other opportunity for the representatives of the people in parliament to express their judgment or their opinion on this vital question.

It is suggested that the bill is the result of the plebiscite. But, Mr. Speaker, we were told that the plebiscite was not a vote on conscription. It was said, and repeated over and over again, that the plebiscite did not mean conscription. Then how is it that as soon as the votes are counted, as soon as the ballots are in, a bill embodying the principle of conscription for overseas service is presented to this house? Why were the electors of Canada told in the plebiscite campaign when we asked them to release the government