

you find honour, soliciting the citizens through their pastors' own lips, to sign the National Service cards, with the guarantee that the rulers of the country had just declared to these reverend gentlemen that there would be no conscription. The archbishop of Montreal, Mgr. Bruchesi, almost died of grief when he learned he had been so grossly deceived, after having given instructions to the whole clergy of his diocese to speak of those cards from the pulpit. He has taken the trouble to write over his signature that he has been deceived, odiously deceived. Well, here now, we have come to the point of disbelieving what our own bishops tell us, the archbishop's word is not to be accepted, for he is himself deceived. Do you think this thing will last very long, Mr. Speaker? Have you got to stand such a rule much longer? I do hope not. I hope that, ere long, we shall have an Administration we can take some stock in, upon which we may depend, for truly it is more than painful, in a country like ours, to be compelled to openly declare to all the people that there is no longer any trust to be placed in those who govern us. They say: by means of the Act we want to pass we will gather the military forces and send them beyond Canada. The honourable members on this side of the House have demonstrated that such an Act could not be passed under our constitution. The matter has been well discussed, from every point of view, the most able men have stated that military forces could not be raised here to be sent beyond Canada. I read and read over again, Mr. Speaker, the British North America Act, as well as the 1904 amendment, and there is no equivocation, no ambiguity possible, no possibility of a doubt. When the law is not clear, when an act is unsatisfactory, when there is ambiguity or equivocation, when a double interpretation can be given to a law, the spirit may be taken preferably to the text, but authors who expound the rules for the interpretation of statutes tell us: You cannot and you must not substitute the spirit to the letter of a law when its text is formal.

When the text of an Act is clear, positive and precise, when there is no reason to doubt, to substitute to the text the spirit of the Act would be a violation of every legal principle; the spirit may be substituted to the text, only in case of open doubt. But, in this case, the law is so plain that it is impossible to show the shade of a suspicion and it takes the vast and powerful imagination of the honour-

[Mr. Lafortune.]

able gentlemen on the other side of this House to find even a subject of discussion. You cannot ask Canadians, our Canadian militia, to take any part, against their will, in wars beyond Canadian territory. But do they say, it is Canada's war which is now being waged in Europe. I say no; it is not Canada's war. Canada has not made any declaration of war to anybody whatever; Canada has not been attacked and it is Canada's war only in the Government's mind and in that of their friends.

As I have said a few moments ago, Mr. Speaker, Canada has nobly done its duty; it has contributed more than 423,000 soldiers; it has spent almost fabulous sums of money and the sacrifices of all kind and nature it has imposed upon itself are countless; we have gone even beyond our means. I contend it is sheer madness to say that Canada will give her last copper and her last man to save the Empire.

What a fine argument! Must then Canada be ruined, that bankruptcy be completed, in order to save the Empire? "Save the Empire!" such is the cry of these good gentlemen; it pays them so well. Who will contend that when two houses are on fire, your neighbor's and your own, that you should go and save your neighbour's house first, and let your wife and children perish with every other thing you held most dear? I am, indeed, very fond of those Englishmen across the sea; I have never seen them nor met them, but I do really love a great deal more the children of my own country. I have no kin in England, Mr. Speaker, but I have in Canada generations and generations, whilst these gentlemen just landed here immediately want to take the best places around the table. I am quite willing to give them a fair opportunity in this country, but I mean, before all, to preserve my kinsmen and my friends, as well as this parcel of land which is, so to speak, a portion of my own existence, and upon which I have spent so much labour. They may say that we should give our last cent to save the Empire; as for me, I shall say I have no more to give.

When the treaty of peace will be signed, what compensation will Canada get? Do you believe Canada will be invited to share in the spoils? One would have to be very silly to so believe. For my part, in spite of the tremendous sacrifices we have made, I am convinced that we shall be completely ignored at the hour of the final settlement of accounts. England will have her share; Belgium, her own; France, Russia