

fair, I must say the Government have done excellent work in a great many ways, the public feel that more ought to be done, and it is that feeling, I suppose, that has caused the Government to decide on this anaemic Bill calling for a plebiscite.

When the Speech from the Throne was being debated I had the honour of moving that the following paragraph be added to the Address:

The Senate regrets that by the insertion in the Speech from the Throne of a paragraph setting forth the intention of the Government to seek release from an electoral pledge Your Excellency's advisers are taking a stand contrary to the spirit of our parliamentary institutions and to the principle of ministerial responsibility.

We on this side still adhere to what was stated in that proposed amendment, although it was lost on division. Under our constitutional form of government all governments, in peace or in war, must assume the responsibility of dealing with the problems which come before them. They have to solve those problems and then come before Parliament and stand or fall by what they have done. The present Government, however, found themselves in an uncomfortable position. I read the speech of the Prime Minister, in one part of which he stated that Canada was in what he called, I think, an unfair position, by reason of the feeling of our Allies that they were engaged in an all-out effort and we were not; and he expressed the view that the time had arrived to ask the people to free the Government so that they might take more active measures.

My right honourable friend (Right Hon. Mr. Dandurand) has stated that the public clearly understand the meaning of this plebiscite. If that is so, all I can say is that I and the people I have met and talked to are very much more dense than the public of Canada, for I can make neither head nor tail of it. There is not a single commitment here. The Government are asking an intelligent Parliament and an intelligent people to vote for this thing which means nothing at all; and when the Prime Minister and other Ministers in another place were pressed to say what action they would take if the plebiscite carried, the answer was merely, "Trust the Government." If the people of Canada know what steps the Government are going to take should the vote be "Yes," they have far more intelligence than I should have thought it possible for anyone to possess in regard to this matter when the Government have not indicated in the slightest degree what they are going to do.

The difference between the Government and the senators on this side of the House is that in view of the very serious war situation which

exists to-day we believe there is no need whatever for this plebiscite. I say nothing about the occupied countries now dominated by the Nazis, but when we consider that within the short space of two months we have lost the great naval base of Singapore, the great and rich country of Malaya, the Dutch East Indies and part of Burma, and that Australia and New Zealand are threatened, time surely means something. Yet, while so great a war is raging, the Government are going to present a plebiscite to the people of Canada. I read the speech by the Secretary of State, and learned that after the Bill is passed in Parliament some ten weeks more will elapse before the vote is taken. I presume it will be some time in June or July before all the returns are in from the whole of Canada and from overseas and the Government know the final results of the voting. The seriousness of the war demands immediate action, yet all this time is going to be wasted. This long process of taking a plebiscite is to be followed, with the appointment of returning officers, deputy returning officers, enumerators, poll clerks, and so on, at a cost to the country of \$1,500,000, whereas the whole thing could have been avoided if the Government had followed a constitutional and proper course, which I think was the only course to follow.

I have been reading a little about the United Kingdom, to see whether a plebiscite was ever taken over there, and I have found that in all the hundreds of years since the Mother Country has had parliamentary institutions there never was a plebiscite. If the seriousness of the war situation had been placed before honourable members of the other House by the Prime Minister of Canada, in a vigorous speech, as he is so well qualified to do it, then, to quote his own words, which I have just read, Parliament would have freed his hands. Why was that course not pursued? "Oh," the Prime Minister says, "I made a promise not only to Parliament, but to the people, and there is a moral as well as a legal side to the question." He was tremendously impressed with the moral side of the question, and that is the reason for putting this plebiscite to the people and in consequence delaying by nine months, or probably a year, the taking of further vigorous action for the prosecution of the war.

If the vote on the plebiscite is an overwhelming "Yes," then there will be more delay. Should the Government decide there is need for compulsorily sending men to theatres of war outside of Canada, there will have to be a debate in Parliament. Well, by the time all the ballots are in, Parliament may not be in session. In that event we shall have to wait until Parliament is assembled again, and