

As a consequence of the last war our debt now stands at four billion dollars. Should the present war last for any length of time, I may state without fear of exaggeration that it may reach 10 or 12 billion dollars in consequence of taking such a part in foreign wars.

As the Prime Minister stated himself, we must first mobilize our industries, we must first mobilize our national economy. This means, in plain words, that Canadian industry shall take care of all the unemployed in the country, that these shall be absorbed to the last man. And we have the right, I believe, before taking such an important step, to consider the problems with which we shall be faced, once the war is ended, as the result of this industrial and commercial mobilization of our country. When, on the morrow of victory, all those who will have had highly remunerated employment in our industries during the war shall be dismissed, together with those who, in one way or another have benefited by the war, in addition to all those who shall have been under arms during this period, we shall have on our hands an army of unemployed, an army of men suddenly become destitute and having to cope just as suddenly with new problems. And in what position shall we be, Mr. Speaker, to solve these problems? I say and I repeat that our country will be bankrupt. We shall have nothing on our hands but a bankrupt country whose financial resources will have been drained by participation, and it is this drainage which will prevent us, once the hostilities have ceased, from being able, by means of unemployment allowances, to take care of our destitute people, and, what is more, from being able to discharge the obligations which we shall have assumed toward the great war veterans, their widows and their children.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that, in connection with the problem which the house is now discussing, we must also consider the post-war problems, and, among them, none is more important than the industrial, commercial and military demobilization. I am satisfied that those who actively seek to force participation upon us are not inspired by the lessons of the past and are not looking forward to the future, because I claim that, if general bankruptcy creates in this country after the war a chaotic condition as a consequence of the obligations which we will incur, we will inevitably throw ourselves in the arms of our powerful neighbours to the south. What will be the result, for us of the province of Quebec, if, as a consequence of our participation in this war—should it materialize, which I do not want to see—and of our financial situa-

[Mr. W. Lacroix.]

tion, we throw ourselves in the arms of our neighbours who will have remained neutral and who will have at their disposal all the necessary financial resources? It will mean—and I wish to emphasize that point—the disappearance from our old province of Quebec of the institutions and the traditions for which our forefathers have fought and for which I myself continue to fight in advocating a policy of non-participation.

Mr. Speaker, we speak of the neutrality of the United States. Let me read a statement made by Mr. Herbert Hoover, former president of the United States, who speaks as an American while I speak as a Canadian.

Mr. Hoover said:

The whole nazi system is repugnant to the American people and the greatest sympathy of the Americans will go to the democracies, but, no matter what our sympathies may be, we cannot settle the problems of Europe.

Well, let me say this: Whatever its intervention may be, Canada cannot, any more than the United States, settle the problems of Europe.

Mr. Speaker, I pay tribute to the heroism of the people of Poland who are defending the sacred soil of their country. They are now writing one of the most beautiful pages in the history of their country. I pay tribute to the heroism of the Englishman and of the Frenchman who are defending the soil of their countries, but I also pay tribute to the good common sense of the Canadian who wishes to remain a Canadian. That will be my last word.

Mr. R. A. PELLETIER (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, all of us realize at this time that we have indeed entered upon a very grave hour. This afternoon we listened with great attention to the dramatic and convincing appeal of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe), a member of parliament representing a constituency in the province of Quebec. We have also had the pleasure of listening to two other hon. members from the same province, both of whom held entirely different views to those expressed this afternoon by the Minister of Justice. This afternoon the Minister of Justice stated clearly and definitely the position of Canada with regard to our relationship with Great Britain and the rest of the empire. We know that so far as we are concerned at the present time the attitude taken by the Minister of Justice cannot be questioned.

So far as Canada is concerned the fact is that we are committed to be of help to Great Britain. This is a fact which could not have been ignored by hon. members from the province of Quebec prior to the present situation. During the course of his remarks this afternoon