

that action taken under the act as amended, must be authorized by order of the governor in council. In other words the decision will be the decision of the cabinet.

On February 25 I gave to parliament a very clear statement of the factors of which account would be taken by the government in reaching a decision. These were known to the people of Canada at the time they were being asked to give the government a free hand.

Replying to a question of the leader of the opposition as to what the government was going to do in certain eventualities, I said, as reported on page 918 of *Hansard* of February 25, 1942:

Let me answer the question first of all in a broad way. The government is asking the people for a free hand in order that it may do in the circumstances as they may arise what is most in the interests of the people of Canada. We wish to make Canada's war effort as effective as it can possibly be made. What we shall

NATIONAL UNITY AND THE CONSCRIPTION ISSUE

The danger of extreme views

In most controversies, there are those who take extreme views. They want everything their own way, and if not allowed to have their own way, they begin to threaten and abuse those who venture to hold an opinion contrary to their own. They become impatient even of a consideration of a question upon its merits, or the effect their attitude may have upon the well-being of others.

In national affairs, this sort of attitude is bad enough at any time. In times of war, however, where the preservation of national unity is of first importance to the war effort of the nation, and where the issue is the most controversial in a country's history, the insistence, by any considerable portion of the population, upon an extreme position is almost certain to be fraught with the gravest possible dangers to the state.

Surveying the field of public controversy on the issue of conscription for service overseas, as it has been reflected in the press, and as doubtless it will find expression in this House of Commons, there would appear to be three general views, two of them diametrically opposed. The first is that conscription for service overseas should be inaugurated at once, that nothing less will suffice; the second is that conscription for service overseas should not be inaugurated under any circumstances. In other words, there are some who want conscription for overseas service, and this at once even if it is not necessary; and some who say they won't support conscription for overseas

do at any particular time will depend upon the course which we think at the time is necessary and advisable and most effective in Canada's war effort. That decision is not going to be made in the light of any one factor. It is going to be made in the light of all conditions as they exist and as they are known to the government at the time. . . .

And later:

The government is going to do the thing that it believes is going to further to the uttermost Canada's war effort, all circumstances considered. May I say that when I say "all circumstances considered," I have in mind the conditions as they may exist in respect to the war in different theatres and the conditions that may exist in Canada itself.

As to the right thing being done at the right time and in the right way, it seems to me that necessarily comes to be a matter of the degree of confidence which parliament and the people have in the administration charged with the responsibilities of carrying on the war.

service at any time no matter how necessary it might be to help to save our own country. Each of these is a very extreme view and attitude. Neither extreme, I believe, should be permitted to prevail.

There is, fortunately, a third view—a view which I believe, accords with the opinion most generally held throughout the dominion. It is that conscription for service overseas should be inaugurated only if and when, in the opinion of the government, it becomes necessary to the security of our country and to the maintenance of its war effort. That view is the one which is held by the government. It represents the government's policy with respect to conscription for service overseas. In a word, that policy may be described as not necessarily conscription but conscription if necessary. Considering all relevant circumstances, I submit that no other policy will serve to keep Canada united, or to further Canada's war effort in the manner which, at this time of war, will best serve the interests of Canada, the interests of the British commonwealth of nations, and of the other united nations which are linked together in the common cause of freedom.

Knowing the disastrous effect upon Canada's war effort which a controversy concerning conscription for service overseas would occasion in Canada, to say nothing of the problems to which the enforcement of such a policy might give rise, the government, I need hardly say, has done all in its power to prevent our

country from becoming divided over the conscription issue. It has done so without sacrifice in the slightest particular, of any step essential to an all-out effort. It would have been fatal to the unity of Canada for the government to have done otherwise. It lies beyond the power of the government to prevent an issue from arising. But it would be equally fatal for the government not to continue to do all in its power to prevent the issue becoming one which could ever impair the efficiency of our war effort and the magnificent record our country has already achieved, and which every citizen of the dominion is justified in viewing with the utmost pride.

Task of Parliament to safeguard unity

I cannot believe this parliament is going to permit that unity to be destroyed by a political quarrel over a question of the method by which men are to be raised for overseas service. Canada, and Canada's future, is far more vital than any question of conscription. It is not for me to tell any hon. member how he should proceed in presenting the issue to his constituents. I do believe, however, that the issue of conscription for overseas service would soon vanish from the realm of political controversy if those who prefer conscription for service overseas would say to their constituents: "There are thousands of patriotic Canadians who, for reasons that are readily understood, are opposed to conscription for service overseas and that we should be prepared, at this time, to take those reasons into account"; and if those who are opposed to conscription for overseas service would say to their constituents: "I prefer the voluntary system and I will do my utmost to make it work, and I appeal to you to do the same; but, if conscription is ever needed for Canada's sake and for Canada's future, I will not oppose its application."

Both might say to their constituents: "We are fighting this war as one free and united people against an enemy who seeks first to destroy our unity so that later he may take away our freedom and our country itself. In the face of that terrible danger, we cannot afford to have any differences that it is at all possible to avoid."

In the whole history of the world, no two peoples have ever lived so long in such close association with so little friction as those of French and British descent in Canada. In a century of political union we have built a nation which stretches across half a continent. We have conquered the wilderness. We have achieved great material progress. We all have become deeply attached to one

common homeland. We have accomplished miracles in order to help defend our homeland against a ruthless enemy. No one will ever make me believe that in the hour of testing, the achievement of a century is to be imperilled by permitting any issue to arise which might threaten our national unity, and that in the hour of its greatest danger and in the time of gravest crisis for all mankind.

I am sure I need not ask hon. members of this house of all shades of politics and from all parts of Canada to weigh and consider with the utmost wisdom and prudence all that is involved of Canada's present and future in the national aspect of the problem which is now before us. It may well prove to be the most critical of any the parliament of Canada has ever faced.

The right attitude

Lest words of mine might appear to be biased or exaggerated, I should like to quote from an editorial which appeared in the *Montreal Standard* of May 30, and which is entitled "Crisis in Canada." It is but one of a number of editorials which have recently appeared in publications throughout Canada, which sense with clearness the real danger to Canada, should the right attitude not be assumed at this time by all whose responsibility it is to guide our country's present course and help to shape its future destiny. It presents an appeal which I believe will meet with a ready response in this House of Commons, and which I also believe expresses the true spirit of Canada. The editorial reads as follows:

The Dominion of Canada stands at the most critical hour of its history. Its future as a nation depends on understanding between English and French-speaking Canadians. One cannot make Canada without the other. At the present moment there is a grave danger of a cleft being driven between the two that would not close over for generations.

It is not a political situation, a crisis of corridor and caucus. It is a crisis of feeling. And a nation's life depends on the feelings of its people.

Only if there is a strong will for understanding on both sides can we come through the difficult times that have arrived. Canada must come first in thought, in action and in words.

English-speaking Canadians must force their minds to understand the background of the thinking of their French-speaking compatriots. They must realize that their fellows in Quebec are intensely loyal to Canada, that they hate the enemy and his works as much as anybody, that they have contributed mightily to the country's war effort. English-speaking Canadians must realize that the hard fact that