

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): And preceded by the conscription of wealth.

Mr. ROEBUCK: That is the herring across the trail. If my hon. friend objects to the government having the power to take care of the details, how does he think a conscriptive measure can be enforced? How could it be administered even if it were passed by the house? In the very nature of things a statute can deal only with general details; it can determine the principle and little more; the remainder, that is, its administration must of necessity be left to the cabinet.

I must congratulate the hon. member for Weyburn upon the speech he has just delivered. We are discussing a definite measure, and at least he has directed his remarks to the measure itself. I listened this afternoon to a long discussion by the leaders of the two parties other than the official opposition, and I must confess that if that was what the public heard, I have no doubt they would be both confused and bewildered. Instead of addressing themselves to the measure before the house, the two leaders made this bill a vehicle for the expression of every possible idea they could think of, whether it was relevant or irrelevant to the measure before us. They turned it into a wheelbarrow, loaded it up with the entire platform of both political parties and dumped it on the floor of the house.

At least the member for Weyburn has discussed the question at issue, and I congratulate him upon doing so.

I listened, as did all the members of this house, of every party, and, I suppose, every division of thought, to the remarkably eloquent and appealing address of the hon. member for Richelieu-Verchères (Mr. Cardin), and I must say to my fellow members that my heart went out to him for the sincerity with which he spoke and the musical eloquence of his words. He said he was not ashamed to represent his French-Canadian compatriots. In reply I should like to say that his French-Canadian compatriots are honoured by his representation. I will go further than that and say that I am proud to call him a fellow-Canadian compatriot. Of course that does not mean that I must agree with all the hon. gentleman said with such force and eloquence.

He complained, for instance, of the form of the question that was placed upon the ballot, and I agree that something may be said with some force along that line. Unfortunately, however, the time for complaint has gone by. The time for the revision or the improvement of that question was when it was being formulated by the cabinet of which he was then a member, and he not only took responsibility for the form of the question

and the fact of the plebiscite but actually approved it before the country. It is rather too late now to criticize the action for which he and the other members of the government were responsible.

As I understand it, the hon. member for Richelieu-Verchères says that the answer to the question does not warrant the government now introducing a measure which has for its purpose enabling legislation for the introduction of conscription. Surely we did not spend a million and a half dollars on a plebiscite to obtain from the Canadian people an answer that means nothing. The answer must surely mean something, not nothing. If the question and its answer are the innocuous pair that some people reason they are, and did not give the government power to introduce conscription if it is necessary, let me ask, what did it mean? If it did not mean that, why did the constituencies of the province of Quebec, or many of them, vote "no" in such overwhelming numbers? Was it simply because it was verbiage that they did not like? Certainly not. Those constituencies in the province of Quebec which voted "no" did so because they knew that this was a step in the direction of conscription. Equally, Mr. Speaker, in my judgment those constituencies which voted "yes" did so because in their view it was a step in the direction of conscription.

The hon. member for Richelieu-Verchères drew an eloquent and imaginative picture of the distinction between the British race and the race from which he springs. He says that when England is attacked, those of the British race rush to her defence because their deep racial emotions impel them to action, while with the French Canadians their enthusiasm has to be raised by the logic of the mind. That argument appealed to me. I can see the truth of what he says. It is perhaps a reason why we of British extraction should be most kindly in our attitude toward people of French extraction. But I think the error of his statement lies in this, that the heart of the French Canadian floods with emotion just as rapidly and just as strongly as that of the English race in this country when the name of Canada is mentioned. Who, Mr. Speaker, sings "O Canada" with greater fervour than my fellow-Canadian citizens of French extraction? The error of our position lies in our failure to realize that the boys who are fighting across the English channel, the Canadian young men who are bombing German cities, are fighting the battle of Canada. The error lies in a failure to realize that the armies of Canada which are now in England and standing guard on the chalk cliffs of Dover are in very