

C273231

I like the rugged honesty of the ex-Minister of Public Works, the hon. member for Richelieu-Verchères (Mr. Cardin). He told us in precise terms that he had divorced himself from every other consideration in his older days in the determination to stand by his people. He said he would translate to the house the ideas which actuate the people of his province. In other words, he was the mirror image and reflection of his people. I do not agree with the sentiments he expressed. I like far better the courageous attitude taken by the Minister of National Defence for Air. He is a Canadian from the province of Quebec, as is the ex-Minister of Public Works, but he also remembers that he is a Canadian first and a Quebecker second.

Where does the Minister of Justice (Mr. St. Laurent) stand? What is he? I listened and tried to understand his position, but I could not form a conception of just where he stands. I wonder what attitude he will take with regard to the defence of Canada league, or some such organization, which is at present working in the province of Quebec. The people in that province have subscribed to four principles, one of which is that they will not stand for conscription. As to the other three, hon. members will find them set out in the press. I will not trespass on my own time in order to recite them.

I wondered when I read those four clauses which it is suggested might be read from the church steps on Sunday whether the Minister of Justice will take them under review and see if they are not much more of a hindrance to recruiting than anything that fell from the lips of Colonel Drew. I am using that only as a parallel. The solid thinking people of Quebec have no leadership, have no head; they have had twenty-five years of listening to leadership of a kind that has made for disunity in this country. I think on mature reflection, after a little more experience in the Canadian House of Commons, the Minister of Justice will not carry us back to 1849, to two or three hundred years ago, as he did. That will not help in any way the unity of this country. To my mind it does not help at all; it hinders recruiting; it hinders Canada from going forward in the way she ought to go. I hope the good people of the province of Quebec will frown these resolutions down:

1. Firm determination never to accept conscription for overseas service nor any measure which leads thereto or renders its application possible;
2. To demand of the government that it do not amend article 3 of the mobilization act;
3. To recall to the government that the adoption of any such measure of conscription

[Mr. Harris (Danforth).]

will forever compromise the unity of Canada; that it may, perhaps lead French Canadians to doubt the accuracy of the allied war aims because the government will assume an attitude contrary to that defined in the Atlantic charter by Roosevelt and Churchill;

4. To give to the present resolution the greatest possible publicity in order to inform the public, either by reading the resolution at the doors of the church on Sunday or by distributing copies or by publishing it in the local and parochial press or by means of posters.

I hesitate to mention the church of any denomination, but I take my lead from the Minister of Justice when he referred to the church in this chamber and what the church thought about things.

I ask, who is the King of Canada at the present time? King George. When the oath of office is taken, hon. members who occupy a seat in this chamber swear allegiance to King George. Whom then are we fighting for? Are you going to fight for your king, or are you going to go back on your oath of allegiance? Listening to some of the speeches in this house or reading the translation of some of them, I say with due respect to my colleagues that in the heights of eloquence to which they rose some of them forgot the oath of allegiance which they had taken. They forgot where they are heading. These leaders who will make these speeches on the church steps about these four resolutions, where are they going to lead you? Can you go to the United States? You do not want to go to the United States; your church does not want you to go there. The Minister of Justice will remain here in Canada; he is of Canadian birth. Do my hon. friends from Quebec want to have an independent republic within the confines of Canada? By no means. We can work together, but we cannot do so if a leading minister of the crown states from his place in this house in effect that, "we are impossible of assimilation". That is not so. I know it is not so. From the very depths of my soul I say, after twenty years here and after doing business for over thirty years with people of Quebec, that assimilation is possible. Some of my best business associates and friends are French Canadians. If, Mr. Speaker, you will pardon a personal reference, an associate of mine earns a salary by teaching the French language. That is the way we can get along together. I say to the Minister of Justice, do not speak about the possibility of separation. I am glad to see the minister shaking his head, saying "no". I exhort all my fellow members when making speeches to remember that they swore to be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King George VI, but bear that allegiance and do that work side by side with your fellow Canadians of English-speaking

C273232

JULY 7, 1942

origin and side by side with Britain in an all-out war effort. Hitler trampled on the nations which were giving a half-out effort. Do not let it be said that we Canadians in our day and generation in like manner gave only a half-out war effort and found ourselves trampled under his feet. When Mr. Churchill spoke to us in this chamber, his last words were, "Hitler asked for total war; let us give it to him."

Mr. SPEAKER: The question is on the amendment. Those in favour of the amendment will please say "aye."

Some hon. MEMBERS: Aye.

Mr. SPEAKER: Those against the amendment will please say "nay."

Some hon. MEMBERS: Nay.

Mr. SPEAKER: In my opinion the "nays" have it.

Mr. ROY: I ask that the vote be registered.

Mr. SPEAKER: It requires that five members shall stand in order to have a recorded vote, and since only two are standing, I declare the amendment lost. The question now is on the main motion.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. SPEAKER: If the Prime Minister speaks now he will close the debate.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: In bringing to a conclusion the debate on the second reading of the bill which is before the house, I do not intend to review in detail the arguments which have been presented from different sides. In all that has been said, I have found no reason to alter any of the statements or opinions I expressed in introducing the bill on May 11, and in opening the debate on the second reading on June 10.

I believe the debate itself has more than justified the wisdom of the course the government has adopted in bringing before parliament for consideration, the methods of raising men for service overseas.

It has been recognized from the outset that the question is highly controversial. Had its controversial character been the only factor of which the government was obliged to take account, the task would have been comparatively simple.

In opening the debate, I stated that changed conditions in the character and scope of the war were sufficient of themselves to make necessary at this time the fullest consideration of the question by parliament. I carefully refrained from saying anything of other

factors which had forced the issue in a manner which has served to emphasize rather than to lessen its controversial character. I still propose to refrain from saying anything about this particular aspect of the controversy beyond drawing the attention of hon. members to how wholly unnecessary and misleading it has been.

In the present war, the issue of conscription for service overseas was first raised, not in parliament by the responsible spokesman of any political party, but outside parliament altogether. The effort to make it a political issue became evident a little over a year ago in the course of my visit to western Canada.

On each occasion when the issue was pressed to the fore, the method adopted was the same. An attempt was made to identify the single question of the method of raising men for service overseas with "a total effort". It was asserted that the need was an immediate one, and would have to be met immediately.

Conscription for overseas service was certainly not necessary when the agitation was started in Calgary, over a year ago. At that time, those who were responsible for the agitation asserted that conscription for overseas service had become imperative. It certainly was not necessary at the time the new leader of the Conservative party issued his manifesto for National Government and an all-out effort. It certainly was not necessary when, as a part of the same campaign, the committee of two hundred in Toronto sought to identify "total effort for total war" with the immediate introduction of conscription for overseas service. It certainly was not necessary at the time the government's intention to hold a plebiscite was announced in parliament. Nevertheless we were told by hon. gentlemen opposite that, considering how long the plebiscite would take, the government should be censured, and the plebiscite itself condemned. It certainly was not necessary at the time of the by-elections in Welland, in York South, in St. Mary's, Montreal, and in Quebec East, though we were told, at the time, by its advocates that conscription was the real issue of those campaigns. It is now clear that conscription for overseas service was not necessary at the time the result of the plebiscite was announced.

In the present debate there are two things which have been proven beyond all shadow of doubt. The first is that the use of the method of compulsion for raising men at any time up to the present, has not been necessary to obtain the men required for overseas service in any of the armed forces of Canada; in the air force, in the navy or in the army. The second is that the totality of Canada's