

The Address—Mr. Fournier (Hull)

and how much I sympathize with them in their grief. I have lost a friend, a model and a counsellor. The Prime Minister has no longer at his side the man who has so long been his loyal and faithful friend. He will miss the sound advice of the man who always supported him with his eloquent, sincere and ringing voice. In associating myself with his grief, I wish to tell him that we also will ever cherish the memory of the great Canadian who has departed.

Mr. Chairman, I entertain no illusion about the difficulty of the task I have undertaken this afternoon.

We are, with the rest of the world, passing through a terrible crisis. The world is divided into two thoroughly armed camps set on imposing on the universe their ideologies and opinions concerning methods of government. In our own country, we have to deal with a situation, as set out in the speech from the throne, which will upset, especially in my province, many of the opinions for which we have been struggling in past years. I wish to remain calm in the course of my remarks. The great respect I entertain for our adversaries precludes me from saying anything derogatory. I shall not forget, in the course of my speech, that I am a Canadian, living in a north American country which is a part of the British Commonwealth, a country with a population of 12 million inhabitants, that is less than 5 per cent of the total population of the allied countries waging war on the Axis. I repeat: I shall speak as a French-Canadian. We are members of a free parliament and we owe this freedom to British institutions; no one may prevent a representative of the people from expressing, with due respect for other peoples' opinions, his views with conviction or his opinions with sincerity.

I intend to speak on the war effort of Canada from 1937 to this day. I had the honour and pleasure of visiting England in October and November last. The impressions I gathered from this trip, I shall expound to you in English. Then, I shall review both the successes and reverses of the allies.

I shall dwell on the most important part of the speech from the throne, that which deals with the request of the government to be released of its promises and commitments in connection with the enlistment of our citizens for overseas service; I shall attempt to express the views at least of the French-Canadians I know and who have set their faith in me.

Canada, as well as all democratic countries, was and remains a peace-loving nation. Democracies do not prepare for war. This would be against the spirit of their institutions.

[Mr. A. Fournier.]

The debates during the session of 1937 are proof enough of the aversion of free and democratic peoples for any war of territorial or economic conquest. Only when their way of life and their liberty are endangered will they take the fatal step. In 1937, when it had become evident that a part of the world was endeavouring to apply military pressure to impose its ideologies and opinions on the world, the Canadian government asked parliament to increase its military appropriations by 35 million dollars; it succeeded in securing this amount only after a struggle of many weeks.

In 1938, after having witnessed the plundering of Austria, the seizure of parts of Czechoslovakia and the Munich drama, our population began to understand that danger was getting nearer and that it had become necessary to spend money for equipping our army if we wished to defend our own territory and our own lives.

And from 1937 to the fall of 1939, the government organized this country's defences. We entered this war at the outbreak of hostilities. Our defence estimates then amounted to no more than \$64,500,000. To-day, there is no limit. The last budget called for an expenditure of \$1,500,000,000 and the speech from the throne informed us that our war effort will grow still larger. There is but little criticism of the present war effort on the part of the people and I refer here to the province of Quebec. There is no criticism of our country's present war effort. If you take its population and its limited means into account, you will see that our war effort is comparable to that of any one of our allies. In a moment I shall refer to what Mr. Churchill said in this house, barely three weeks ago.

We entered this war with France as an ally. Trusting Hitler's word and promises, believing that he would protect the rights of minorities, the small nations thought they were secure behind the ideas of neutrality which then prevailed in the world. Events have shown that this doctrine of neutrality cannot subsist in a modern world, organized as it is to-day. There are no neutral countries left. Still less so is Canada by reason of its situation, of its ideas and by reason of the love of freedom which actuates its people. The events of 1940 have shown that our former motherland was not prepared to enter this conflict, no more so, incidentally, than was England. France witnessed the invasion of its territory and the downfall of its government. It is not for me to discuss the motives of the French generals in disregarding the advice received at the time but I wish to repeat