

There has been confusion in the public mind and in the mind of many of us up to this time as to just what this Government purposes, some confusion and wonderment as to whether we really have been at war or not. On the latter phase the statement of the honourable leader of the House (Hon. Mr. Dandurand), and the corresponding statement of the leader of the Government in the other Chamber, have set all our minds at rest. It has been the commitment of the present Administration, as I have always understood it, that Parliament would decide what should be our participation in any war. Apparently this has now been interpreted in somewhat extended form as meaning that Parliament has to decide whether we are at war or not. Well, it is over now. I do not think any good has come from this special way of putting to the country the status of Parliament. Parliament always decides anything within the competence of Canada to decide. No other body and no one else can do so. I have never felt that it has been within the competence of Canada to decide whether we are at war or not. I do not feel so now. Either we are part of the British Empire or we are not; and we know we are a part. We cannot be at peace while the head of this Empire is at war. The pronouncement of Laurier stands, and will ever stand. We could, without physical restraint, refuse to be at war, by moving outside the circumference of this Empire; I say without physical external restraint, for Great Britain would bring none to bear. But Canada as a member of the British Commonwealth cannot so refuse.

We may, of course, decide what shall be the measure of our participation. We always have decided it, and always on the recommendation of our Government, exactly as we are doing to-day. The only difference has been this, that the confusion, which has already done some harm, comes because of the present artificial and clumsy device. Further, this circumnavigation has prevented us taking our stand at a time when the decisive taking of a stand might conceivably have been of some value in preventing war itself. It is conceivable that if we could have declared ourselves two weeks ago as we knew we ultimately would—subject, if you will, to confirmation by Parliament when it would meet—then, before the final die was cast by the arbiter of Germany, our declaration might have had some effect in holding back his hand from that awful throw. I did what I could to have this Government take such a course several days before Poland was invaded. My efforts failed.

I close the subject by saying this. I think it is unfortunate that Canada stands in the

position of having contributed to the prevention of this catastrophe precisely nothing.

We now have been at war for some time. We are to make a declaration on the passing of this resolution. The Orders in Council laid on our Table two days ago proclaimed distinctly, in many places, a state of war. I have perused them. In Order in Council after Order in Council reference is made to the enemy; and provision is made for internment of enemy aliens. Unless we were at war there could have been no enemy. No wonder the public mind has sought the light!

Now, what confronts us? On the merits of our case there is, I hope, no difference of opinion. I hope it will not later be said we have been dragged into this to serve the selfish purposes of Britain or of any other country. For myself, I am not a critic of the course the British Government has taken throughout these months. There are some who are critics. I may be wrong—I have been wrong. This thing I know, that all through these many years the door of British counsel has been open. We have been in a position to make our wishes known, to give our advice. How far, if at all, we have availed ourselves of that privilege, I know not. I fancy we have given no advice whatever. But after communication of all facts and proposals as they evolve from day to day and month to month, after every opportunity to make suggestion or criticism, if we do not take advantage of such opportunity, then, even though there be those who think something else might have been done, who criticize a Berchtesgaden conference or a Munich conference, no criticism ought to be heard to-day against united action in our land.

We have witnessed a long struggle for peace, a struggle all could follow, a struggle carrying in its train impatience and internal attacks, involving indeed passing humiliation. We have seen the prestige of governments deteriorate because of exhaustion of every possible effort to restore the reign of common sense and save the world from torture. We have now to admit that all this has failed. Surely there are none so perverse that they cannot see the magnitude of the issue. Germany asserts that the Treaty of Versailles was severe. Oh, yes, it was. You cannot fight a great war and look forward to a generous peace. You can look back and wish there had been one. I do not know whether we should have been better off if the Treaty had been more generous. There are those, and they have some vindication to-day, who in the light of what has happened since believe that the Treaty erred on the side of confidence in Germany, on the side of liberality. But whatever may be said

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN.