

*Mobilization Act—Mr. Douglas (Weyburn)*

group went out across the country and asked any people with whom we might exercise any influence to relieve the government of their responsibility. Why? Because the Prime Minister had definitely promised that this matter would come to parliament. The people of Canada were not asked to put the conscription of man-power for overseas service on the statute books of Canada; they were asked to relieve the government of all commitments in order that the matter might be discussed, to relieve all members of this house of any obligation in order that they might attack this subject on its merits. But that argument does not apply now.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: What is my hon. friend talking about right now?

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): May I ask: are we discussing conscription?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Yes; the question of overseas service is now before parliament.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): The moral obligation of the government was released in order that the matter might be discussed in parliament. To relieve the government of its legal responsibility without any assurance that it intends to conscript all the material resources of Canada is a totally different matter. Whereas we were willing, and did ask the people to relieve the government of its moral obligation, we are not prepared to relieve the government of its legal obligation unless the government is prepared to take some definite steps for the conscription of wealth, industry and the other material resources of this country.

In a few days the reserve unit to which I am attached is going into camp and I may not be here when the vote is taken. I should like to place my position before the house so that there may be no doubt as to exactly where I stand. Had the amendment moved by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart been accepted as being in order, naturally I would have voted for it. If the government is prepared to withdraw this bill and introduce mandatory clauses to section 2 of the mobilization act conscripting the wealth and industry of Canada, as outlined this afternoon by my leader, the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart; if they are prepared to follow that policy with a conscription measure for the conscription of man-power for overseas service, then I am prepared to vote for it. But if the government fails to follow such a course, I say definitely to-night that I shall vote against this measure.

[Mr. T. C. Douglas.]

I do not intend to lend either my voice or my vote to giving the government power to conscript young men, many of whom have never owned a square foot of the soil of this country, many of whom for years did not know where to lay their heads, if at the same time the government proposes to leave those to whom this country has been good, those who own a large part of this country, go comparatively free. This is either everybody's war, or it is nobody's war. As long as the government fails to utilize the material resources of the country, I for one will not vote to give it the power to conscript human life.

Mr. A. W. ROEBUCK (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Weyburn (Mr. Douglas) has just said that the public has been confused and bewildered by the bill now before the House of Commons. I think he has demonstrated the truth of the statement he made, demonstrated it in a personal way rather than by argument. The hon. gentleman said that he and his associates travelled across Canada asking that the government be relieved of its commitments against conscription. Yet he now says that he will not permit the passage of a bill, the plain object of which is to make possible the putting into effect of a conscriptive measure.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): Is that what the plebiscite was for? That is not what the Prime Minister said. He said it was not.

Mr. REID: No one interrupted the hon. member. We gave him a fair hearing.

Mr. ROEBUCK: If the hon. member will hear me, I will tell him the whole story of the plebiscite and what was intended, in my humble judgment, by the question and answer. I know the hon. member is under some obligation to leave shortly, but if he will wait I am sure he will hear the whole story. The hon. gentleman has told us that he is prepared to vote for a conscriptive measure if it is brought before the house in sufficient detail. Yet he proposes to vote against the bill which has for its purpose the very thing which he proposes to support.

Mr. COLDWELL: Oh, no.

Mr. ROEBUCK: Practically. I suppose my hon. friend will say that the difference lies in the fact that some detail could be lined out in a bill brought before the house, detail which under the present measure must be regulated by order in council. I refer to the putting into effect of conscription by the government.