

one we are dealing with, it was, "Having sent soldiers overseas, we will not support them beyond voluntary enlistments, even if that system fails." Yes, there is a difference! The second pledge was more degrading, and it is one which no party and no Parliament can implement if it is to maintain its own self-respect. And Parliament cannot maintain its self-respect and its traditions by passing on its responsibility and its duties to the mothers, the wives, the sisters and the sweethearts of the young men of the nation who would be affected by a compulsory military service law—no, not when life and national honour are at stake.

I shall be told that a large section of public opinion in the country, and particularly in the province of Quebec, is opposed to conscription, and that for the sake of national unity it is far better to resort to this kind of expedient. Let me examine that contention, analyse the reasons why there is opposition, and see whether a plebiscite will abolish the differences and render it possible for the Government to carry out the task of enforcing military service overseas without danger to the State—that is to national unity—or to its own political future.

In the last war we had conscription. It was opposed by the Liberal party at the time, and has been since. The old flag of the Liberal party, which throughout the country had been a dignified emblem that great and sincere Canadians had followed with pride, became the emblem of anti-conscription. It became an emblem of disunion and of rancour. During the last war there was some rioting, it is true. That rioting was organized not by the Conservatives, but by others; and its purpose was not to help win the war, but, by the preaching of a perverted sense of duty, to delude the people. Nevertheless conscription was enforced, and soldiers went to the front to pick up the torch from heroic but failing hands. The country kept up the quarrel with the foe, and kept faith with its defenders until victory crowned with laurels the brows of the fallen and of the living. The Liberal party, however, kept up the quarrel, not with the foe, but with their political opponents in this country.

In 1921 an election was held. Mr. King, who previously had been preferred as Liberal leader to Mr. Fielding, that noble old man who had committed the crime of placing victory ahead of party, was elected to power. And at what cost? I remember distinctly a cartoon that was widely distributed by the Liberal organization. It showed our ex-colleague, the Right Hon. Mr. Meighen, walking in blood to the top of his boots, and with blood dripping from his hands. In his right

hand he held a whip which he was using to send a group of young men to the slaughter. On the other side of the road weeping women stood in the attitude of martyrs.

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD (Richmond-West Cape Breton): The Liberal party would not do that, surely.

Hon. Mr. COTE: Upon that cartoon and all it meant, Mr. King built up a successful political career; and except for five years he has been in power ever since. Anti-conscription, which, after all, is just the evasion of the supreme duty which a man owes to the State in time of danger, became the guiding principle of a party which once had preached greater liberty, but later used its great influence over the people to dwarf and enslave the national conscience, and to stop at the source the generous impulses of generous and chivalrous natures. The doctrine did not pervert the whole population, but in many constituencies it perverted a sufficient number to provide the necessary margin for success at election time.

Unfortunately, in our political parlance, we refer to this sort of thing as "political adroitness." But life has its returns and its revenges, and at a time when the Liberal party was again enjoying the sweets of office and the exercise of power over the destinies of others—an ambition legitimate in itself, but sometimes achieved by unworthy tactics, and one which in other lands has turned men into tyrants and aggressors—there fell to the lot of the Liberal Government the conduct of the worst war in history, a war which will tax the brains, the endurance and the courage of the people of this country as they never have been taxed before. That Government has decided to remain in power alone; not to share responsibility with any other statesman who has ever dared to disagree with the Prime Minister; and it must now reconcile the exigencies of our war effort with its past political adroitness. Compulsory military service is obviously, I realize, the worst hurdle it has to jump; and if it does not jump that, the party may suffer, because what is political adroitness in time of peace may become treason in time of war. If it does jump that hurdle, it may lose part of its political clientele in certain places. This is indeed an embarrassing situation, one which calls for a solution based on courage and a sense of duty, not on more political adroitness.

That duty will not be discharged by holding a plebiscite. A plebiscite will lead nowhere. If it carries, it will not get rid of the embarrassment and uncertainty of future action. If it does not carry, as long as this Govern-

Hon. Mr. COTE.