

*War Effort—Government Policy*

ment that has just been moved places an entirely different construction on the motion moved by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King). I am going to read a few quotations from the Prime Minister's speech of November 27 last. They will show that there are certain contradictions in it, and that it placed us in an unenviable position when it came to a vote on this particular motion. At page 6610 of *Hansard* I find this:

I hope this House of Commons will keep in mind what it is they are here being asked to do. Let me follow my notes closely in this: It is to support the men overseas, and nothing more than that. . . .

Then, on page 6611 of *Hansard* we find this:

That is the issue before the house. It is not the question of conscription; it is the question as to whether the present government should continue to conduct Canada's war effort, or whether the direction of that effort should be handed over at this stage of the war to another administration.

Then further along, at page 6613, we find the following:

That motion, as I have already said, does not, as I have been careful to state, mean that the government is asking for confidence in all its policies; it does mean very clearly that we are asking for the support of the House of Commons, which we shall need to secure the needed reinforcements to support the men overseas at this time of war as well as our other war-time policies. That is all that it calls for.

Then further along, at page 6617 he had this to say:

Let me say of this motion, it does not ask for approval of order in council P.C. 8891. That order was enacted in strict conformity with Bill 80 and the government's authority to take such action was specifically approved by the vote on Bill 80 in 1942. The issue of conscription is not being decided by this vote; it was settled two years ago.

The motion does not ask for an unlimited vote of confidence in the government. To do so would be unfair to political opponents of the government who nevertheless are willing to aid the government in the vigorous prosecution of the war.

Then further on, the Prime Minister had this to say:

The motion does ask, and asks only, whether members are prepared to support the government in continuing to carry on Canada's war effort at this time.

Any member who votes against this motion is asking to have the present administration resign, and another administration immediately take its place.

That statement by the Prime Minister placed the members in a most peculiar position, one in which I did not wish to be placed. As stated by the hon. member for Macleod (Mr. Hansell) earlier this evening, if you do you get heck, and if you do not you get heck anyway.

[Mr. Fair.]

There are a number of reasons why more of our men have not gone active. Canada has made a wonderful contribution up to the present, but a better contribution would have been made had some of the wrongs that have been done been corrected. Even though we have on the statute books quite a lot of good legislation, since receiving letters from men who have been released from service in the armed forces I am wondering whether the administration of this legislation will be in the interests of the men being discharged or whether the treasury or the government of the country will be taken into consideration in the administration of this particular legislation.

I believe that if the returned men of world war 1 who have enlisted in this war for the second time, as well as a number of their comrades, had been properly treated, there would have been a better response to the request made to N.R.M.A. men to go active. I have particular reference to a number of men who enlisted for the second time in this war. They placed everything they had on the altar of sacrifice and then because some of them owed money on land obtained under the soldier settlement scheme an order in council was passed providing that up to \$20 a month of their dependent's allowances, allowances which rightly belonged to their wives and families, would be stopped and turned over to the soldier settlement board in payment of those debts. I do not think that is proper treatment for those men. As I say, there are a number of men who enlisted in great war 1 who have to be considered in connection with the government's war policy.

I am referring to 6,153 old veterans, men who went through the mud, slime and suffering of the first great war and came back and settled on land under the government scheme. Those men went into debt to an average amount of \$4,358 twenty-five years ago. Those men and their wives and families have worked continually since that time, but only a little over 4,000 of them have been able to obtain clear title to their land. That would leave almost 6,153 who still hold contracts, or approximately twenty-five per cent of the original number. After those men, along with their wives and families, had worked during all those years, we find that at the end of last March their average indebtedness to the soldier settlement board was \$1,254, or twenty-nine per cent of their original indebtedness.

We found—and when I say "we" I mean officials of soldier settler organizations as well as a number of other Canadians who are vitally interested in this question—that condition existing and we made representations