

to his electors and may he beware of being more than temporarily crippled, for he should not forget that in Chateauguay the French Canadians, who compose three-fourths of the population, will ask him to account for his vote in favour of conscription.

I have stated the reasons for which I consider this Act unconstitutional and vexatious, let us now see whether its enforcement is possible. I say no. You cannot attain the desired object with a law so drafted. What is the penalty imposed by the Act upon those who will not submit to it? The Act says: If you do not submit, you will be sentenced to jail! Well, then, what will they do? They will go to jail, that's all. I owe to Sir Lomer Gouin, Prime Minister of the province of Québec, my sincere congratulations for having had the clever idea of having had proper cells made at Bordeaux for our future state prisoners. You will send to jail those who do not obey; but you must not forget that this will not send them to war. After having spent three years in the state prisons, they will be free. Then, what becomes of your law? Can you force these men to go to the fields of battle? Will the Government have gained anything after they have quartered, clothed and boarded, for three years, at the expense of the state, these men who want to evade the law at any price? I say, Mr. Speaker, that a law the execution of which is impossible in its very principle is good for nothing, because its application would not be practical and it could not attain its object. The only result of this Act will have been to cause trouble in this country.

Our mandate has expired long ago. The mandate which I have obtained in 1911, in that struggle, one of the fiercest I have had to sustain in all my political career—for I had to contend against both the Conservatives and the Nationalists—that mandate, Sir, was good for five years only. I must confess that, in that contest, I had quite a hard time of it, but I hope that, in the future, these good Nationalists will be with me, since I shall be with them. Just as in the case of all the hon. members of this House, my mandate has lapsed; we have remained in office only by virtue of our own vote. Is that a mandate? I contend that we are duly empowered to carry on the ordinary business of Government; but that does not give us the right to send a whole people to slaughter; and the people of this country contend, as I do, that we have not the power to do it. Personally, I would have no objection to remain as a

[Mr. Lafortune.]

member without undergoing an election; that costs less and it is much easier; but we are living in a country where the people have the right to choose the members they wish to represent them and to be governed by whomsoever they deem fit for the task. It has been said that, in a stable it is not always the best horse that eats the most, and the same thing may be said of politics. The people are the master, to them belongs the right to judge in the last resort. Besides, you know this as well as I do: nothing is so uncertain as politics; I might even venture to add that it is as in matters of courtship, where one must be very careful until the young lady has given her assent.

I would not care to recall sad memories to my right hon. leader, but I will mention that momentous struggle he fought when he was elected by an overwhelming majority; the Hon. Mr. Mackenzie honoured him later by admitting him into his cabinet. At the next election, they succeeded in defeating him, the village merchant, a Mr. Bourbeau, being elected in his stead; a perfectly honest man no doubt, but who, after all, should not have been preferred to the noblest and most eloquent man to be found.

But Sir Wilfrid Laurier took a signal revenge; he turned towards Quebec, the old Capital, and, as experience has well shown, it is not an easy thing to wrest it from him—Yes, Sir, the people should not be ignored, I know that through my own experience, for I also have suffered defeat. I then say Mr. Speaker, that the mandate, if it may be called a mandate, which we now hold, does not go beyond purely administrative matters. There are in our Constitution three powers: The legislative, the executive and the administrative power. The legislative power has disappeared with the lapsing of our mandate, the executive power is continued in force for ordinary matters; therefore, all that is left us is the administrative power and we can only expedite public business in the people's interest, until the people give us a new mandate. Therefore, I have no hesitation in asserting that the State prisoner, the one who will have been arrested for having refused to obey that Act, will enjoy adequate protection under our laws.

There are under our laws five writs of royal prerogative. The British Crown maintained, at the time of the conquest, these writs of royal prerogative which are still extant for our protection, thank God. We have the mandamus, the certiorari, the quo warranto, the writ of prohibition and, last but not the least, the habeas corpus.