

Had the government's action, in introducing the amendment, been due to any such interpretation, either of the purpose of the plebiscite, or of the result of the plebiscite, I would have been the first to support the minister in his protest. I can, however, find no justification for any such interpretation, either of the purpose of the plebiscite or of its results.

Conscription not the issue in the plebiscite

I have already said this afternoon that a "yes" or "no" in the plebiscite was not to be, and could not truthfully be construed as a "yes" or "no" for conscription for service overseas. I said precisely the same thing in the debate on the speech from the throne, and in the debate on the plebiscite bill. I said the same thing in my radio broadcasts. In interpreting, through the press and in this house, the results of the plebiscite, I also repeated what I had previously said.

The issue was not conscription but whether the government, subject to its responsibility to parliament, should have a free hand in the discharge of its duty in carrying on the war. This free hand the government has still to secure from parliament. Prior to the plebiscite, because of past commitments, the government was precluded from coming to parliament to request a free hand. The government is no longer in that position. It is free to come to parliament, as it does to-day, because of the release as a result of the plebiscite from all such commitments.

In order to confirm what I have just said, allow me to read from the nation-wide broadcast I delivered on April 7, in an opening appeal to the Canadian electorate for an affirmative vote:

The issue at present is not conscription; it is whether or not the government, subject to its responsibility to parliament, is to be free to decide that question itself, in the light of all national considerations. The government is not asking you to say whether or not conscription should be adopted. That responsibility the government is asking you to leave to itself, and to parliament, with entire freedom to decide the question on its merits.

Let me also read what I said on April 24 in a final appeal to the electorate for an affirmative vote. This appeal was also made in a broadcast which was nationwide:

When the plebiscite was announced many did not understand what it was on which they were going to be asked to express an opinion. Many thought that conscription was the question to be decided. In other words, they believed that the government was placing on the people the responsibility of deciding the issue of conscription, instead of assuming that responsibility itself, and making its own recommendation to parliament.

It has now been made clear that conscription is not the issue. Let me emphasize that fact. Those who tell you that conscription is the issue are misleading you. The sole purpose of the

plebiscite is to obtain for the government, and for parliament, a perfectly free hand in dealing with this, as with all other questions. All you are being asked to say is whether or not you are in favour of the government's hands being perfectly free at this time of war. That is the meaning of the question to which you are being asked to reply yes or no. If you reply yes, you will not be committing the government to conscription for service overseas; but you will be enabling the government and parliament to discuss and decide that question solely on its merits.

I have quoted from my own nation-wide broadcasts. Let me now quote a paragraph or two from the nation-wide broadcasts delivered by the leader of the opposition on April 20. I quote:

This plebiscite is simply to give to the government and Mr. King release from a commitment not to enlist men for overseas service by compulsory methods. That, primarily, is the only issue involved. Emphatically, it is not, in this specific vote, an issue for or against compulsory service for overseas. It is merely a vote to release or refuse to release. Mr. King from a pre-election pledge. . . . You are not called upon, by this plebiscite, to declare for or against conscription for overseas service. That may come; it does not follow from this plebiscite. . . . The only question involved is whether the government shall be free to follow any policy it may deem necessary in the future.

Let me also quote from the nation-wide broadcast delivered by the leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, on April 21. I quote:

The vote on Monday is not a vote for or against the conscription of man-power for overseas service. It is a vote to release members of parliament from their pledge not even to consider such conscription. Thus, while the Prime Minister in his radio address on April 7 quite properly stated the reasons why it is necessary to obtain a release from the pledges against conscription for overseas service, he made it quite clear that such conscription is not the issue which will be decided by the plebiscite. That issue will be decided by parliament when and if the government presents it for discussion.

From these quotations, it will be seen that the leader of the opposition and the leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation expressed precisely the same view as myself of the issue in the plebiscite.

Misinterpreting the plebiscite

It cannot serve any useful purpose, indeed it can only do a great injustice to the Canadian electorate, to attempt to place upon the results of the plebiscite any interpretation other than that which, before the vote was taken, the electors were told would be placed upon the results. To interpret the results otherwise would be doing a cruel injustice to many members of this House of Commons who most certainly would never have advocated an affirmative vote had it not been made clear beyond all doubt that

in so doing they were not endorsing conscription. I know of many members, some of them with sons serving in Canada's army overseas, who were themselves opposed to conscription, but who did all in their power, in their several constituencies, to secure an affirmative vote. This they did in order that they themselves and "the government and parliament should be wholly free to exercise their best judgment in dealing with every situation in the light of what is best for Canada, and for Canada's effort in the present war".

To claim that what had been sought or obtained by the plebiscite was a mandate for conscription is to assert that the plebiscite was a mere subterfuge. Such a claim goes further than that: it is equivalent to saying that those who stated that the issue

was not conscription, did not mean what they said; that they were deliberately seeking to deceive the electorate.

Such a claim does a particular injustice to hon. members of this house, who knowing the importance of national unity at a time of war did their best to remove the prejudices which some others were doing their utmost to inflame. In the endeavour to bring home to the people of their province the truth of Canada's position in the present war, and the need in the interests of national security as well as of national unity for an affirmative vote, none fought more valiantly than the majority of the members of this house from the province of Quebec, including my former colleague, the then Minister of Public Works and of Transport.

THE POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT

Amendment accords with purpose of plebiscite

Let me make this perfectly clear. If the government has brought in the amendment at the time it has, it is not because of any false interpretation of the results of the plebiscite, but for reasons that are in complete accord with the purpose for which the plebiscite was held.

I have said that the purposes of the plebiscite were to place the magnitude and balanced nature of Canada's war effort in its true light, and to secure for the government a free hand in the prosecution of the war. Both purposes, I believe, should be achieved as speedily as possible.

I made this abundantly clear in the words with which I concluded my final broadcast on April 24. I quote:

Let me just say this, that if disaster should ever overtake us, it will certainly be said for generations to come that had the government's powers not been restricted, the disaster never have occurred. Such is the responsibility that may come to rest upon those who, in the existing crisis, are unwilling to remove restrictions and give to the government a free hand in its war policies.

To-day, the enemy is so strong that he can only be held at bay, and finally defeated, by the common action of all the united nations. For her own security, Canada should make it perfectly clear to the other united nations and, above all, to the United States, that Canada is as ready to help them as we know they will be ready to help us. An overwhelming affirmative vote on Monday next will serve to make that perfectly clear.

To-day, despite the magnificence of Canada's war effort, the impression is being fostered among other nations that because of a restriction on the powers of the government, Canada's war effort is not an all-out effort. This impression is quite unfounded. Nevertheless,

it is working a grave injustice to our country as a whole, and to every man and woman who is making any contribution towards the winning of the war. I want that injustice to end. And so I ask you, my fellow-countrymen—every one of you—to help give to our country complete freedom and strength for an utmost effort both in its own eyes, and in the eyes of the world. You can do this by voting "yes" on Monday next.

How very much to the point the words of that appeal were has been brought home to us all within the past few days, with surprising suddenness. For more than a fortnight past, the forces of the United States and Canada have been combining their strength to meet imminent attack by Japanese forces upon Canada and the United States.

May I say that only in to-day's papers and over the radio this morning we were informed that one of the United States ships just off the coast had been torpedoed. Some men were brought ashore alive, but unfortunately one of the number died before his raft could reach the shore. That is on the Pacific ocean—a ship torpedoed by a Japanese submarine.

The people of Canada, on Monday the 27th of April, made it unmistakably clear that they desired for Canada and for its war-time government "complete freedom and strength for an utmost effort both in its own eyes and in the eyes of the world."

In the eyes of some in our own land, and even more in the eyes of many in other countries, so long as clause 3 remains in the National Resources Mobilization Act, that "complete freedom and strength for an utmost effort" does not and cannot exist. Regardless altogether of whether the removal of clause 3 would make the difference of an additional