

war. This at the very beginning when the mind of the people was so agitated. We had the courage to go there and do our utmost to sustain good understanding between the two races and national unity. We reasoned with the people of Quebec in those days. But we had to tell them that our participation in the war would be limited to the voluntary system. That was not my word only, not the word of the late Mr. Lapointe only; it was the word of the Prime Minister. We carried with those pledges. When 1940 came, a year after we had entered the war, we went there again to urge the approval of the province of Quebec to the programme of the federal government and of the expenditures it demanded from the Canadian treasury. It took some courage then; I can boast about it without being ashamed. It took some courage to go there and preach the same doctrine and tell our people that they should continue participation in the war almost to the last dollar, even to the last dollar that we could borrow. We succeeded. We succeeded with the promise given that as far as man-power was concerned it was going to be voluntary and nothing else.

The plebiscite came. Mind you, Mr. Speaker, it came only two years after we had given, to use the words of the Prime Minister, those "solemn pledges" to the people of the province of Quebec. No wonder that we did not then get the response that I myself expected, although I may say I participated in that campaign at the risk of my own life. But we did not get that result. We accepted 1939; we accepted 1940; we accepted the plebiscite as a way between, in order to adjust our difficulties, and as compromise in order to preserve Canadian unity in Canada.

We said during the plebiscite that the supremacy of parliament would be preserved, that the representatives of parliament would be consulted before any policy of conscription for overseas would be adopted—not consulted in deleting clause 3, but consulted on a programme which would be adopted after representations had been made by the military authorities, and after the need had been shown for the application of conscription. That is not the programme which is now being considered. That is not what we said to the electors, that conscription would be decided on its merits. We are not deciding conscription on its merits. We are not by deleting clause 3, in the light of any new developments, in the light of any new demands, or in the light of new necessities. This is a mere expediency. There is no indication that any need is at present existing. We are playing on words.

We were to discuss what? Conscription in the light of new needs, new necessities, or a change of conditions justifying a change of policy, not a general or academic discussion of the principle. We were told by the Prime Minister that we would discuss the question on its merits, the facts being placed before parliament. Where are the facts? They are not before us. We have before us a declaration that conscription is not necessary and in all probability will never be necessary, unless something of a spectacular nature develops.

The province of Quebec deserves to be listened to in this house, because, although it is a minority, because of the promises made. When that province was asked if there would be a release from the promise made by the government, it said "no". I submit to the majority. I do not want to dictate to the majority in Canada what their policy should be. But there is nothing before us to indicate exactly that a majority of the electors of Canada ever said "yes" in favour of conscription. That is not the situation, because the question was not placed before them. Some people said to me not long ago, "I think your government was afraid of placing the question squarely before the electors on the plebiscite." Indeed, how can we say what the majority did want, when the Prime Minister himself said yesterday that there was no question of conscription when the plebiscite was before the electors? Well, if there was no question of conscription before the electors at the time of the plebiscite, where is the majority favouring this measure?

And if we want to analyse the votes it will be found that the votes in many English-speaking parts of Canada were fifty-fifty—fifty "no" and fifty "yes". I cannot mention any names, or give away any secrets, but I know that many of my English-speaking friends in this house—on both sides of the house—have in their minds that a very large section of their constituents are against conscription for overseas service. They have expressed that view to me, that if the vote had been taken on a straight "yes" or "no", either in favour of or against conscription, the result would have been different. I would not say there would have been a majority of "no" votes, but the "no" votes would have been increased, in very large measure.

The minority does not want to dictate to the majority. But I am afraid that at present the government is listening to a minority which is much less important than the French minority in Canada. It is as the result of rumblings which have been heard from certain corners of Canada that the government has