

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: I say that to obtain the opinion of the people soberly you must eliminate all those questions which would divert their attention.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: That is the way to get an immoral verdict, and you might get one that way on the national debt and a good many other things. I prefer the British fashion of having the representatives of the people elected on the issue. And I prefer that a government who have to take a responsibility should take it and go to the country to get its support, instead of looking upon this as being some remote issue that does not mean the life or death of a nation. The honourable gentleman can have his preference, but I hope I shall not be here if the time ever comes when that view prevails. The Government would have to go to the country for support for their policy, even if there were a referendum, and fight to the death. There would be no prevention of a split on a referendum, but there would be a perilous and stupid breach of British history and tradition.

I know that when I made my suggestion I did not carry very many of the leading Conservatives of the country with me. I must assume, therefore, that I was wrong; but perhaps I was not. However, I took the responsibility for what I said under the circumstances of that time, and I acted accordingly. Circumstances throughout the world change; war methods change; lightning attack succeeds long-prepared attack, and circumstances at some future time might be such that we could not follow the course I suggested. I do not know. I do not think they are yet such that we could not follow it. I am inclined to think that what I suggested is just about what the present Government would do if they found themselves in that most unfortunate plight which I had in mind. However, I am only defending what I said at the time, and I feel sure still that at the time it was right. My confidence in the wisdom of that course is just as strong to-day as it ever was.

My honourable friend says we do not know with whom we might be allied in a war. I am disheartened to hear that statement from him. Certainly we know. And he intimates that it would be very risky to tie ourselves up with Great Britain, because the government over there changes so often. The British people may support a certain kind of policy to-day, and six months or a year later they may reverse their decision; therefore, my honourable friend suggests, we cannot co-operate with them in matters of defence. Does that follow? I know that changes occur in Great Britain. So they do in every democratic country. But does that

mean we cannot co-operate with Great Britain in a great scheme for defence? Does not France change its policy and its government? Why, sometimes a number of swift changes are made in one year. That fact does not prevent Great Britain from co-operating with France in matters of defence. A moment after a new government has been put into power in France the co-operation with Great Britain is just as intimate, just as real and just as useful as it was under the preceding government. And surely we have more in common with Britain than Britain has with France. France's common interest with Britain is that of defence. We, too, share that common interest with Britain, but we share far more than that. It is a serious and terrible thing to hear the leader of the Government in this House say that they do not know any whom we might be fighting with in the next war.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: It would depend on the circumstances.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: Does the honourable gentleman mean that we might not be fighting on the side of Britain, if we fought at all?

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Britain might not be in the picture.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: We in the picture and Britain not?

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Yes.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: What? Surely the honourable gentleman did not think before he made that statement! He tells this House—and his statement will be spread all over Canada—that we might be in a war when Britain was not on our side, and indeed not in the war at all. There is not the slightest chance of that.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: We might be obliged to defend ourselves.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: We know who will be behind us when we have to defend ourselves; and we will never start fighting till we do know.

Some Hon. SENATORS: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: The honourable gentleman understands that. These are terrible issues. The time may come when the words of the honourable member will sound very strange in this country. Indeed, that time will come to-morrow morning. There may come also a time when the honourable member will wish he had never uttered those words. That will be when the hour of trouble falls upon us. We know very well