

opinion. These gentlemen who would impose conscription in order to send our soldiers to fight for liberty, so they say, on the soil of France, would prevent liberty from flourishing even in that very province of Ontario.

It was painful to hear from the lips of the hon. member for Parry Sound (Mr. Arthurs) such base and despicable accusations as those we have had to endure. It seems to me that this gentleman who is a military man, who has been oversea and was a witness of the valour of the French Canadian soldiers, should be the last one to fling abuse in the face of the compatriots of those French Canadians who have covered themselves with glory. Having seen them in action, I do not understand how he can have the audacity, in this Parliament, to make such vile accusations against the citizens of my race. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the people of my province prefer, as I do myself, Colonel Arthurs, who voluntarily enlisted for service on the other side, to the hon. member for Parry Sound who would impose conscription by abusing the province of Quebec. And this hon. member, or rather Colonel Arthurs, deserves much more credit and consideration for the part he has taken in the victory of Vimy than he deserves for the mean work he is doing for the benefit of his party just to help it to win an electoral victory.

We are not the only ones to denounce conscription. It is true that in the province of Ontario a good number of the people's representatives have seen fit to break off with their party and have allied themselves with the Conservative party upon this question, but there are other provinces in the Dominion where the English language is that of the majority, and we have heard several members from those provinces strongly oppose conscription. There cannot be two ways about it. If the hon. members of the provinces of New Brunswick and of Nova Scotia, and some from the western provinces have the right to oppose this Conscription Bill without being disloyal, I now ask you why we should be charged with disloyalty when we preach the very same doctrine? Certain parties wonder at hearing us say that the enlistment of 500,000 men is an excessive number. I will not repeat the words which have been already quoted, those of an important personage in the British Empire, Lord Shaughnessy. When Lord Shaughnessy tells us that the promise of enlisting 500,000 men is of doubtful wisdom, I wonder how they can then turn

around to the province of Quebec, to its representatives, and charge them with disloyalty when they make the very same statement. If Lord Shaughnessy remains loyal to England although indirectly opposing conscription, if he remains loyal when he says that the enlisting of 500,000 men is excessive, I do ask myself how we can be charged with disloyalty when we do nothing else but repeat what he has said. No, we are not disloyal. But such are those who intend to deprive the people of its liberties in order to maintain here the plague of autocracy which England wants to stem on the soil of Europe.

Mr. Speaker, laws are useful and efficient when they are consistent with the needs of the people, and the way to know the people's needs, is to consult them. You cannot do it by posing as an autocrat as did, this afternoon, the hon. Minister of Justice. It is not by assuming the power, the right of life and death over the citizens, but only by consulting the people, either by means of a referendum or through elections.

Those who oppose the referendum say: But the people must be guided. Some of the hon. members who have left the Liberal party have made such a statement. If there was a referendum, Mr. Speaker, what would prevent those hon. gentlemen from going down into their counties, attend public meetings and speak in favour of conscription.

Mr. Speaker, volunteering is an individual sacrifice. Every one is free to dispose of his life as he thinks proper and offer it for a cause he believes to be a good and a just one. But conscription is an obligation imposed by the State; then, it is the State that disposes of the life and blood of its citizens. I say that before adopting such a measure we must be well convinced that we have the right to do it, that we are acting according to the will of the people and in their best interest. It is a serious, a most serious question, replete with grave consequences which may be disastrous for the future of a country like ours. I say that this question must be decided in the light of reason and not in the fumes of fanaticism.

The Government does not seem to suspect the gravity of this question of compulsory service. One would think, in listening to these hon. gentlemen, that the lives of the citizens are of no account, of such mean value that they can be disposed of without any consideration and with the sole object of preparing an electoral programme.