

so we must face facts, we must deal with conditions which exist and take our people as they are. On this score I have a few remarks to offer. I wish first to draw the attention of this Chamber to the undertaking given in Parliament by the Prime Minister on behalf of the Government on March 30 last:

The present Government believes that conscription of men for overseas service would not be a necessary or an effective step. Let me say that so long as this Government may be in power, no such measure will be enacted.

The Government's primary duty is to maintain the unity of the nation during this serious crisis, so that the country may be unhampered in devoting its best efforts to the task it has assumed. As the Prime Minister pointed out, a divided Canada can be of little help to any country, and least of all to itself. It is only by cultivating a strong and distinctive Canadian patriotism that we can hope to weld together the various parts of our Dominion. It is hard to get Canadians to share a common sentiment when they are asked to take part in an international conflict wherein it is not clear that Canada has a distinct and special interest. All our people are not equally concerned with the interests of the United Kingdom and of Europe. Concern about these matters has its sentimental source in ties of kinship and personal contact. As the Prime Minister said in the House of Commons last session, it is probably true for most people that, as years pass, the centre of political gravity tends to shift from the land of their fathers to the land of their children. Probably most of us whose ancestors came from the British Isles stand midway in this respect between our French-speaking fellow-citizens, whose ancestors have been established here for three hundred years, and new-comers, who in some instances naturally think in terms of the life and ways of the land they have left.

But the feeling of personal interest on the part of Canadians generally in what is affectionately termed the "Old Country" is still a very strong and determining factor. This fairly explains the mental attitude of our people at large. I have met persons who argue that Canada, being a North American country, should not ruin itself to maintain peace and order in Europe; that our debt, which in 1914 was less than 350 millions, was increased by more than two billions by the Great War, and that not only have we not yet started to reduce that indebtedness, but on the contrary we now owe more than four billions; and that our first duty to our country is to save it from bankruptcy. They cannot understand why Canada should be the

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only country on the North American continent to intervene in this struggle, more especially when the United States of America, the greatest democracy in the world, stands aloof. I have answered them in the words of André Siegfried, the French economist, that not for Europe alone is it vitally necessary that Great Britain should survive as strong and healthy as it is to-day, but for the world at large, which, because of British influence and power, has during the last century and a half enjoyed peace and order on all the seven seas, where formerly it was not always safe to venture.

But apart from all the reasons which may explain and justify our intervention, there is one which dominates them all: the fact that Canada is part of the British Commonwealth of Nations. The majority of Canadians are of British stock, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific we hear the voice of that majority insisting that Canada go to the help of the Mother Country. This is a natural and a noble sentiment, which admits of no contradiction. There is an apt French saying: "Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas"—The heart has its reasons which reason does not fathom. Those of my compatriots throughout the land who are not swayed by that irresistible emotion are in duty bound to respect it, and they will do so in a fraternal and gallant spirit. By showing a clear understanding of the feelings and actions of their fellow-citizens, they will be in a position to ask in return that a sentiment which is not shared to the same degree by the whole country be not transformed into a national obligation. Thus, and only thus, will national unity be preserved throughout Canada. Therein is explained and justified the announced policy of the Government, that Canada, as a free nation of the British Commonwealth, is co-operating voluntarily, without coercion upon any one.

Hon. C. P. BEAUBIEN: Honourable senators, I have very few words to add to this debate. I understand that Parliament will formally declare war this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: As soon as the Address is adopted.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN: What does that mean for us? Simply the registration of a fact which has existed ever since Great Britain declared war on Germany. We, as a part of the British Empire, have fallen into the abyss of war, and we can crawl out of it only if we withdraw from the British Empire and renounce our allegiance to our King. There is no other way out. I wonder if very many people in this country are prepared to