

hon. gentlemen who supported that motion, who felt that the good of the country imperatively demanded such action, now say one after the other, "Oh, we did something we had not any right to do; although we did it with our eyes open, we had no right to do it, and therefore we do not now represent the people."

I was amazed to hear members make speeches in this Chamber on the strength of the fact that they did not represent the people. I desire to say one word with reference to that proposition. It is quite true that, under our written constitution, this House was elected for a fixed period of five years. But the constitution of this country is susceptible of amendment, and the people may express their will tacitly, just as clearly as by their vote, and when, in 1916, this Parliament, composed of representatives about whose mandate there was no doubt, gentlemen who represented the entire country, unanimously said that the safety of the country required that there should be no election, but that the life of Parliament should be extended, and when the people of Canada from one end to the other ratified that decision, I say, Mr. Speaker, that we then modified the constitution in the most regular and normal British way, that is by what is done and accepted as being the needful thing to meet new and unprovided for conditions. It is true we have a written constitution, and it can legally be altered only by the Imperial Parliament. The Imperial Parliament sanctioned the Bill passed in 1916, and that rendered legal what had been decided upon by us. I can say that when the Parliament, under those conditions, and with the absolute ratification of the people—and I am satisfied that will not be disputed—passed the Bill extending the life of Parliament in January, 1916, a Parliament was constituted with all the powers that ever belonged to any Parliament in the Dominion of Canada. Our right to sit as a Parliament was questioned by the hon. gentleman from Montcalm (Mr. Lafortune) as being illegal. That is part of the original law that the hon. gentleman gave us this afternoon, but when it is said our existence is unconstitutional I can only say that while this Parliament is not here by the will of the people, expressed in the ordinary and usual form, it is here by the unmistakable assent of the people, who were convinced that the expression of their will in the usual form would be detrimental to the best interest of Canada. I, for one, have no doubt of the validity of my mandate, nor have I

[Mr. Doherty.]

any doubt of your powers, Mr. Speaker, in this House. We can do anything and everything that a lawfully and constitutionally elected Parliament can do, and, therefore, I have no doubt of my right to sit here and perform my duties as a member of Parliament. I have already endeavoured to point out Canada's duty at the present time, which is quite clear. Here we have in our hands the mandate, and on our shoulders the responsibility, for seeing that Canada does her duty. Mr. Speaker, I for one—and I am satisfied the great majority of the members of this House will be with me—will not shirk this responsibility to-night upon the mere plea of undue anxiety about the rights of the people.

In conclusion, to go back to where I began, let me suggest that we all endeavour, in the decision to which we may come, and the action we may take in pursuance of that decision, to join together, with the realizing sense that there is but one question in reality before us, and that is: What is the duty of Canada to-night? What is her duty to herself, to her honour, to her Allies, to her voluntary soldiers who have died, and are dying and facing death to-night? Let us forget that there are different provinces. Let us forget all the reproaches one race may think it has to make against another. Let us forget all the petty quarrels which may have occurred between us, by reason of political divergence, or differences. Let us forget that there are any political parties. Let us forget that there are any Government or any Opposition. Let us remember just one thing alone; that there is come to us the great privilege, carrying with it the heavy burden of responsibility, of determining for Canada to-night the most important question that any Canadian Parliament has ever been called upon to determine, a question upon whose right decision, and upon the proper action following that decision depends the honour of our country, Canada.

M. THOMAS MacNUTT (Saltcoats): I wish to place on record my reason for polling the vote I intend to poll to-night. I am a believer in the referendum, as a general thing. If any large questions come before the House and before the country, for which there is no mandate by an election, I think the situation should be laid before the people, and that they should be consulted. But, Sir, I do not see how this present proposal can possibly be a fair referendum. The men who are most interested in the carrying out of this Bill are