

March 2, 1942

C 273120

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I appeal with great respect from your ruling, sir.

Mr. POULIOT: The leader of the opposition said it with flowers, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I think it is customary in matters of the kind to ask *Hansard* to give the exact words.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): May I ask a question? Has the Chairman ruled that the words "fooling the people" or "seeking to fool the people"—I think those were my words—charged the Prime Minister with deceit? If that is his construction, I certainly never intended to do that.

The CHAIRMAN: The words I have to report are: "The leader of the opposition having stated that the question contained in the ballot form in section 3 of the bill was another attempt of the Prime Minister deliberately to fool the people, as he has done so many times in the past. . . ." Those are the words as I heard them.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): If that is out of order, I am quite willing to withdraw. I have no intention of being out of order.

The CHAIRMAN: Those words are withdrawn, are they?

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): You heard what I said—if they are out of order.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: May I say first of all to the leader of the opposition that unless my memory fails me entirely, he was the one, the first one in the house, to express his approval of my having given a straightforward question.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Having asked the question. I never approved it.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I am coming back to what was said in the course of the debate on the address. Great emphasis was laid on the importance of having the question that was to be asked before the house when we were discussing the matter, and in speaking on the address I used the following language, as reported in *Hansard* at page 58:

I shall not go into detail regarding the procedure to be followed in holding the proposed plebiscite. The question which the government proposes to submit to the people is the simple and straightforward question:

Are you in favour of releasing the government from any obligation arising out of any past commitments restricting the methods of raising men for military service?

That was informing the house at the earliest possible moment of what the question would be. At a later stage in the debate, and in the debate on this present bill, some question was raised as to the exact wording of the

question, and I had occasion then to refer the house or the committee to what I had said on the address. This question has been before the house since the house opened, and until to-night the language of it has not been questioned, with respect to any ulterior motive, at least, that may have been in the mind, or as alleged to-night to have been in the mind, of the ministry in the drafting of it. I submit that there is nothing ulterior about the question at all. It is a straightforward question, and inasmuch as the discussion has taken place up to the present in reference to the question in the form in which it is, I hope that hon. members will not suggest the necessity of making any amendments to it.

May I say further that the reason why the question is before us as a part of the bill is largely due to the fact that my hon. friend the leader of the opposition asked that it should be inserted in the bill in the exact words in which it is. If he thought that the question was wrong, or that there was anything ulterior about it, or that there was any duplicity in the wording of it, and so forth, he should not have been the first to suggest that that identical question should be made a part of the bill. It was on my hon. friend's suggestion, that the question as he understood it should be a part of the bill, that I asked that instructions be given to the special committee to see that the question should be so inserted in the bill. I think that ought to be a sufficient reason why at this stage of the debate at any rate the question should not be altered one way or the other.

As to the question, the leader of the opposition now says that the government has the power under the War Measures Act—that it has the power in law and in fact to send men overseas, and that therefore there is no necessity for the question. I have said from the beginning that parliament is all-powerful. As a matter of fact parliament can at the present time pass any enactment it pleases regardless of any commitment that has been made in the past, or any pledge that has been given; but whether parliament would be prepared to do that or not depends a good deal upon what value a man attaches to his word, or what value parliament attaches to its action, or what value a government attaches to its pledge. As to the power, no one has ever denied that parliament has power to do whatever it pleases. With regard to the actual power it possesses to-day to conscript men to send overseas, we have that power under the War Measures Act.

But what was the nature of the pledge that was given, the pledge given on every platform, not by myself alone? I quoted and placed on *Hansard* on Wednesday last the