

Wilson) and the hon. member for Montcalm (Mr. Lafortune) to-day refer to a matter in regard to which I desire to say a word. The affirmation was made that conscription was a bad thing for Canada because of what the Minister of Justice had said to a very distinguished prelate in Montreal whose name I would not think of introducing into this discussion. It was alleged that I had said a thing which was not true. The hon. member for Rouville was delicate in his expression in that regard but I think he fairly conveyed that meaning. My hon. friend from Laval was less delicate. Before he got through with me he told this House that I had made all sorts of false representations to this reverend gentleman. Then, we go on up in a crescendo. The hon. member for Montcalm did not make any bones about it at all. I do not know whether he felt called upon to go one better than the hon. member for Laval but he did not hesitate to state that I had lied to the archbishop. As far as the pledges of this Government are concerned, it is not for me to deal with this subject. Hon. members have heard recited what have been described as the pledges of this Government. It takes a good deal of determination to find a case of broken promises, to read into the declarations which these hon. gentlemen have read, a promise of future action under all circumstances no matter what might happen. Is a Government never to be free to state what its actual policy is, never to be free to state that it has not certain things in contemplation without being held to have bound itself that never in the future (no matter how conditions or circumstances may change, no matter what knowledge may come to it that it had not at the time that of statement of policy) would it take any course different from that which it was actually following and had then in contemplation? That is the proposition.

We hear about the bankrupt honour of this Government and about its broken pledges. I am told that I made all sorts of false representations, and that I lied to a very distinguished gentleman and a very valued friend of mine. I have adverted to the statements that were made on behalf of this Government. Let me say one word as to the statements which I made, wherein I am told to-day that I lied. In the first place, let me say that I would not dream of contradicting any statement made by the distinguished gentleman to whom I refer, as to what I said to him. I accept his statement as to that as unquestionably true, and I have no doubt that I conveyed to him the meaning which he now attaches

[Mr. Doherty.]

to it. It looks as though the desire of the hon. gentleman was to put me in contradiction with this distinguished gentleman, who has my respect and veneration. I say with truth as well as with pride, that I count him among my most valued and respected friends, and if that be their desire, they certainly shall not succeed. I have no hesitation in saying that what I said was true at the time, and is just as true to-day. I said that the National Service cards had no connection, near or far, with conscription. I say that to-day, and it is true. Gentlemen have been through the province of Quebec who were so fond of talking conscription that one would almost believe that they sighed for the day when it might come, or, at all events, might be proposed, in order that they might use the fact to further their political advancement. These gentlemen had been making statements in Quebec, and I shall not say they lied. I have more consideration for the hon. gentleman from Montcalm (Mr. Lafortune) than apparently he has for me. They have been stating what perhaps they did not know to be false, but what they certainly did not know to be true, namely that the National Service cards were a step in the direction of conscription. I stated at the time that that was untrue, and I say to-night that it is untrue and I defy any body to establish the contrary. And because, forsooth, I told that truth, hon. gentlemen talk about my having lied, and they talk about my broken faith and about all sorts of representations that I made. I expressed my absolute conviction, as a conviction and an opinion, that conscription would not come in this country, and I believed it absolutely. If the gentleman to whom that statement was made understood it to be a promise, and said that I made it, let it be well understood. I am not denying that what I said may have justified the view he took of it, though I venture to say nothing was further from my mind, at the moment, than that I was making a promise. Let it be clearly understood I made no such promise. Had I undertaken to make such a promise, hon. gentlemen would have a right to reproach me, not for the breaking but for the making of it. I recognize that that would be a grave offence. Mark you, I refer to a promise such as the one I am reproached for having broken, and such as the hon. leader of the Government is reproached for having failed to keep. I say that if any public man should undertake to promise that he would not adopt a cer-