

THE EXTENT OF CANADA'S WAR EFFORT

Speech by

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Delivered in the
HOUSE OF COMMONS
February 10, 1942



OTTAWA
EDMOND CLOUTIER
PRINTER TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY
1942



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HON. J. L. RALSTON (Minister of National Defence): A good deal has been said in this debate with regard to my department. I shall leave these comments and criticisms to be dealt with at another time. I want to-day to discuss directly the matters mentioned in the speech from the throne. After all, these are matters which are primarily the subject of this debate rather than matters of administration and operation.

Speaking generally my criticism is that in this debate the discussion seems to have centred not around what we shall do to help win the war but how we shall do it, a discussion not of policy but of a particular method or form of procedure; and that is typical of what has been going on in the country for the past six months or more. There seems to be in some quarters a deliberate attempt to obscure the real measure of Canada's war activity. The idea has been sold and rather subtly sold, to use the expression of my hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. Hanson), that Canada is not doing much. And why? Because there is no conscription for overseas service. Nothing else seems to matter. The morale of the Canadian people is being undermined by this insistent and persistent depreciation.

Here is what has happened in this debate. The Prime Minister outlined comprehensively what Canada had done and what she proposes to do. But

what course has the debate taken? I know there have been exceptions but I think I am right when I say that, fairly generally, very little attention has been paid to the government's proposals for further activity in the navy, army and air force, the proposals regarding increasing the vast volume of munitions, the proposals for the mobilization of manpower, the proposal to provide one billion dollars' worth of munitions and supplies to Great Britain, the proposal to spend three billion dollars for war this year. I submit that when we are assessing the extent of what we are doing, measures like these are worth noticing. The measure of the contribution which Canada has made up to this date—I say Canada, I am not saying the government—such measures and the concrete measures which are proposed for the future are really tangible things by which we ought to be able to judge and to assess the extent of what we are doing.

The principle of total war has been laid down, and to that we all agree, but the yardstick which has been used to measure the extent and the "full-outness," to coin a word, of Canada's contribution has been conscription for overseas service. That causes confusion. That obscures the view that this country should get of the measure of our war effort. I want this afternoon, as a measure of what we are actually doing, to indicate one or two principles whereby our activities can be judged.

No person can doubt that Canada is committed to total war. We are committed to it not only for the survival of freedom generally but for our own survival and for the survival of this nation, and for the security of our own homes and families. To wage total war is the stated policy of the government and I believe, indeed I am sure, that it is the determined purpose of the Canadian people.

The Meaning of Total War

But what do we mean by total war? I think it means the most effective use against the enemy of the country's total resources in materials and people. The different countries have different resources. Total war requires a country to plan its pattern for war according to its resources, and more than that, according to the needs and abilities of other countries with which it is allied. One country, for example, might have great resources in terms of people, and for that country total war would mean concentrating effort in raising men and relying upon allied countries for supplies of food and weapons. Another country might have excess resources of food and materials. Its pattern for total war might mean extra effort in production, and a proportionately less effort in raising armed forces. But I do not want you to think, Mr. Speaker, for a single moment that in my view such a country can sit back comfortably and feel it is doing its duty efficiently by tilling the soil and producing munitions and allowing the other fellow to do all the fighting.

Again, a country at war without allies would follow a different pattern from that which would be followed if it were one of a group.

Now, Canada is a member of a team of united nations, and our pattern for total war has to be shaped by the extent of her resources in materials and people in relation to the needs of the whole team.

These things, Mr. Speaker, are very academic, but perhaps they need to be said, and they certainly need to be understood if we are to realize what total war means for Canada.

Canada's Pattern of Total War

Here is the pattern of total war which this dominion, directed by its government and by parliament, is following. It has been shaped by the considerations I have mentioned: first, the nature and extent of Canada's resources in materials and people; second, Canada's needs and abilities in relation to the needs and abilities of other nations with whom we are bound in united purpose to wage this war to the end, or go under.

Canada's pattern of total war has three main parts. I do not pretend to name them in order of importance. I do not think they have any order of importance. Each one is essential. The three are complementary parts of the whole, and that is how they ought to be regarded.

One of the three parts is the production of food; another is the production of materials and weapons of war; and another is the raising of armed forces to combat on sea and on land and in the air. Supporting all these activities is the great civilian effort of the people of this dominion which expresses itself chiefly in the twin essentials of services and morale, and in which no Canadian is too old, too poor, or too humble to have a place and a duty.

So that, put in briefest form, our pattern of total war is a pattern consisting of food, weapons and armed forces. You cannot take one and leave the others in a country like Canada; and the duty of the government is to recognize that each of these three parts—food, weapons and armed forces—is essential to total war by Canada, and to try to determine the proportion which each part ought to bear.

Our 1942 Program

Now let us look at the 1942 program, which, as I have indicated, has not had too much discussion, to see the place which each one of these parts I have mentioned holds.

1. *Food*

First, about food. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King), in his speech to the house on January 26, gave statistics on Canada's food production. I will not repeat them. But I want to remind the house of the great increases in essential items which his figures showed. Canada's program in food production for 1942 is to provide to the limit of our production and to the limit of our productive resources the foods essential to our own people and to Britain. But here, just as in other fields, we must try to utilize as far as possible workers ineligible for military service, in order to release as many as possible of those who are eligible. We still need and expect young men from the farms for our fighting forces. No better fighting men can be found. Many of them have gone into war industry as well, and I freely admit there may be fault in that we have not yet taken full measures to replace those who have come from the farms, by making more certain that workers are provided to keep these farms in operation. A very important part of the selective service plan which the Prime Minister announced will be to deal with that particular situation, because the indications are that more rather than less workers will be needed in this tremendously vital activity.

Then there is the production of weapons, of ships, tanks, planes, guns, shells, and hundreds of items of equipment which are needed by the united nations. Here is a statement of the weapons program, if

my colleague the Minister of Munitions and Supply (Mr. Howe) will permit me, for 1942, just in terms of men and women.

2. Materials and Weapons of War

At the close of 1941 there were about 600,000 workers, of whom about 75,000 were women, engaged directly and indirectly in producing and distributing the weapons and supplies of war. Our production is vastly different from that of the last war. Then it was principally shells and rifles. To-day Canada's munitions production is almost as diversified as the number of items in the arsenal of war. My colleague the Minister of Munitions and Supply told us not long ago that Canadian weapons are already in use by the united nations in practically every field of war in the world. I am told that by the end of the year an additional 100,000 workers will have been employed, and that means a total of about 700,000 men and women engaged directly and indirectly in this essential part of total war, in Canada.

Here again, as in the case of the farms, the selective service plan must function to ensure that as far as possible the workers in these industries are those who are ineligible for the armed forces.

That program for 1942, which means vastly increased quantities, with some 700,000 workers engaged directly and indirectly, will see Canada approaching its visible limit of material and management.

Those are the first two parts of Canada's war pattern—food and weapons. What that program means may be emphasized when we remember that Canada is undertaking an outright contribution during the fiscal year of food and weapons amounting to one

billion dollars for the use of the people and the forces of Great Britain, who are helping to fight what is Canada's war as well as their own.

3. *Armed Forces*

Let me come now to the third part of our pattern of total war, and that is the armed forces. Canada has armed forces for combat on the sea, on the land, and in the air. Many people seem to forget that. They still think of military activities only in terms of the army. That was very true in the last war, when Canada had four divisions overseas in the Canadian Corps; but to-day that idea is wholly erroneous. To-day Canada's effort in arms is represented by numbers and organizations in the navy, the army and the air force which would certainly impress our friends and, I think, ought to impress Canadians just as certainly. In the navy, Canada's plan has been to raise a navy limited only by the number of ships we could obtain. To put it another way, the plan has been to man every ship which could be built or secured.

In the air, from the start we have concentrated on the air training plan and on air strength as probably the greatest immediate combative contribution this country could make. It has proved to be an activity by which Canada, in geography and resources, and by the character of its young men, has been able to make an incalculable contribution.

Now about the army. The objective has been and is to raise and equip, to reinforce and to maintain, highly motorized and mechanized forces, hard-hitting and complete. In this way we take advantage of our resources and materials, as well as of the qualities of initiative and fighting skill which Canadians in battle have always shown. We also have the obligations for defence in Canada, which are more prominently before

us than ever before. Under the army program for 1942, the Canadian army overseas will be, in proportion, probably the most highly mechanized and mobile army in the world. It is obvious, of course, that a country of eleven and a half million people could not raise mass armies comparable to the forces of other nations, and particularly it could not attempt to do so when the army is just one part of the general pattern of food and weapons, air strength and navy.

Those are the general principles which underlie the extent and strength of Canada's armed forces.

Manpower Requirements of 1942 Program

Let us look at the 1942 program—and by that I mean the fiscal year ending in March, 1943. I wish to summarize that program now with particular reference to the man-power involved, but I will not go into details because I think the figures on man-power will be sufficient for our purposes.

In the navy to date over 27,000 men have enlisted and it has a strength of over 350 ships. This program for 1942 requires a further 13,000 men.

In the army to date over 295,000 men have been enlisted and its actual strength is over 255,000 men.

While I am speaking of the Canadian army, I am sure that the House and the country will want to join in expressing the pleasure which we all feel at the arrival in Canada of Lieutenant-General McNaughton. He is a man in whom this country has unbounded confidence. He has given the best of his superb talents to the building up of a fighting formation in the United Kingdom of which we all ought to be proud. We are fortunate indeed to have him at the head of the Canadian army overseas. We do not realize fully how much he has achieved in

maintaining the morale and the fighting spirit of Canadians who have been such a long time inactive but constantly alert. It is a hard test both for commanders and for troops, and Canadians under General McNaughton have stood that test magnificently. I know that the country will learn with immense satisfaction that he has made a complete recovery from his illness and will be ready in a short time to resume his high and responsible position.

When I speak of the Canadian Corps which is overseas, hon. members will recall that it consists of three infantry divisions, one armoured division, one army tank brigade, a forestry corps and ancillary and specialized units with thousands of reinforcements in reinforcement units.

Perhaps I should refer to reinforcements for a moment. A statement was made in that regard and I should like to make this clear. The number of reinforcements dispatched to the United Kingdom is actually in excess of the schedule recommended by the corps commander, who has expressed himself as entirely satisfied with the reinforcements.

The 1942 programme is to organize, equip and maintain an army of two corps overseas. That program requires the enlistment of a further 90,000 to 100,000 men during the present fiscal year. That figure is, in the opinion of general staff, the maximum number of new men who can be effectively trained during that period for service overseas. That will put an exceedingly heavy strain upon the instructional staffs and equipment, because, in addition to these new men for overseas, we must train the overseas units still in this country and also about forty to fifty thousand men for service in Canada; and already arrangements are being made to bring back a large number of instructors from the other side for that purpose.

Under the 1942 programme which the Prime Minister announced, we shall have overseas a Canadian army of two corps composed of three infantry divisions, two armoured divisions, two army tank brigades, and there will be additional ancillary corps and line of communication troops. There will be reinforcements and reserves for all these formations and units. As a result of that program about one-half of the Canadian army overseas will be armoured; and, as I have indicated, that is a proportion of armoured strength probably greater than that of any other army in the world.

That 1942 program is the recommendation of general staff. When I was in England in consultation with the Secretary of State for War, he told me that the most effective and useful additional contribution which Canada could make as far as the army was concerned was another armoured division, and this program provides for that. In the words of General McNaughton, this Canadian army will be a well-balanced, highly effective fighting force, co-ordinated from the front line back to the rear echelons—a weapon forged and sharpened to play a great part when the time to strike comes.

The cost of the army program in the fiscal year is estimated at practically one billion dollars. The 1942 all-out program for the air force calls for between 70,000 and 80,000 men.

Mr. STIRLING: Before the minister leaves the program for the armed forces overseas, would he care to put a number to that? How many will be required to fill that?

Mr. RALSTON: From 90,000 to 100,000 new men. That is up to March 31, 1943. I will sum that up now. The 1942 all-out program for the air force calls, as I say, for between 70,000 and 80,000 men.

And remember this: From the beginning of the war to the end of 1941 over 422,000 men enlisted voluntarily for general service. To sum up the 1942 program for the three armed services, it involves as nearly as can be estimated the raising of between 173,000 and 193,000 men for general service, and to carry it out would bring the total Canadian enlistments in all three services up to between 595,000 and 615,000 men. I have here a table showing how this is made up, and I will put it on *Hansard*:

	Enlistments to date	Program for 1942	Prospective total enlistments up to March 31, 1943
Air Force ..	100,000	70,000- 80,000	170,000-180,000
Navy	27,000	13,000- 13,000	40,000- 40,000
Army	295,000	90,000-100,000	385,000-395,000
Totals..	422,000	173,000-193,000	595,000-615,000

I do not want the house to get a wrong idea. The total enlistments at the end of the 1942 program do not mean that we shall then have armed forces of that size. There have been and will be unfortunately wastage and casualties, and our actual strength will be diminished accordingly. As a matter of fact, of the 90,000 to 100,000 men to be raised this year for the army, probably 25,000 will be for new units and the remainder for reinforcements and reserves. Then there is the defence on the home front here in Canada, a most important part of our effort for total war. I assure the house that these needs are having the closest and most unrelenting attention not only of members from the Pacific coast but also at least on the part of some of us at National Defence headquarters.

Our Canadian Defences

Speaking generally, our Canadian defences, so far as the army is concerned, comprise coast defence garrisons at strategic points on both coasts, local reserves for those garrisons on each coast, and general reserves

which are available for both coasts. At the present time there is in Canada the fourth division which in due course will be converted into an armoured division. There are also the brigade groups of the sixth division located at strategic points. A number of unbrigaded battalions are on coast defence duties on both coasts and there are coast defence artillery garrisons. Special dispositions have been made where that seemed to be required.

It should be remembered that apart from the fourth division and the brigade groups of the sixth division, we have in Canada over 90,000 active service personnel in training centres and elsewhere, and an emergency organization of a proportion of that personnel is being set up as well. We have also fully in mind the mobilizing of further units for Canadian defence, especially in view of the ultimate dispatch of the fourth division overseas. In addition to these mobilized formations and active service personnel we have reserve units, and we have worked out a special reorganization and regrouping of them across Canada, organizing them in brigade groups under full-time staffs and with special provision for training.

We realize that the matter of anti-aircraft defence is of the utmost importance. Hon. members will understand that this is a joint concern of the three services, but it concerns particularly the air and the army—the army for anti-aircraft guns, and the air for aeroplanes. We realize that the matter of anti-aircraft defence is of the utmost importance, but I am sure that this country realizes—I think the citizens of the Pacific coast do—that no matter how complete our anti-aircraft defences are made we can never prevent the enemy from attempting sporadic raids. What we must do is to utilize the equipment we have and can get from time to time to make such an attempt as costly to the enemy as we can. We are trying to do that. To-day on the Pacific coast there is certain special

equipment which does not exist to the same degree anywhere else in the dominion—not all we want, but more than might have been expected under the conditions, and there is more to follow. I can say generally that having regard to the anticipated forms of attack the provisions for Canadian defence have been made up to the limit of our equipment and resources, and we are increasing our defensive strength just as fast as equipment becomes available.

Mr. GREEN: If I may ask a question, does the minister not think it would be well to have a secret session of the house at which the question of the defence of the Pacific coast, or both coasts, could be gone into much more fully than is possible at a regular session?

Mr. RALSTON: The Prime Minister indicated the other day that consideration would be given to the matter of a secret session, and I assume that the Pacific coast defences would be a subject quite proper for discussion at such session. I may say I should be glad to give to my hon. friend or any hon. members from the Pacific coast generally information in regard to the Pacific coast. I have an idea from reading the newspapers that quite a bit is known out there already.

Mr. GREEN: Of course we cannot get satisfaction in that way; I might personally, but it is a matter for the Canadian parliament to decide, and in order to decide properly they must know the facts. I suggest that it is of vital importance to this nation at this time that there should be a secret session at which this question should be discussed.

Mr. RALSTON: In regard to a secret session, as I have indicated, I think the Prime Minister stated some time ago that he thought arrangements could be made to hold such a session, and I anticipate that the subject to which my hon. friend refers would be one of those discussed there.

National Selective Service

I have mentioned the program of food, weapons and armed forces. As part of the program for total war there is much to be done in the way of directing the citizens of Canada towards the task where they can serve best. This is going on in a hundred different ways, but it is to be supplemented by much more comprehensive measures, as the Prime Minister indicated in his speech, from which I shall quote one paragraph:

The government now proposes to apply the compulsory powers of national selective services to other aspects of the war effort as well as to military service. These powers will be applied selectively and progressively to those activities where it is considered by the government that their application will contribute to the goal of a total effort . . .

I shall not attempt to go into details regarding these proposals, as my colleague the Minister of National War Services (Mr. Thorson) will be doing that, I anticipate; but I want to emphasize that the further mobilization of man-power and woman-power is one of the biggest jobs we have in our activities for total war.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Before the minister leaves that—and I want to say that I am impressed and reassured by the nature of the statement which he is making—is it anticipated that the government intends to say to a man: “You shall work here and not there”? The Prime Minister has not made that clear. I do not think you can say to a man: “You must work here and not there.” You might not get results. That is what our labour friends will tell you about that.

Mr. RALSTON: That is a matter which has had a great deal of examination and consideration in England as well, and I am sure it will be dealt with when the measures are brought down.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I am not sure that you can make a man work.

An hon. MEMBER: Not for less wages.

Mr. RALSTON: There is the old saying that you cannot make an opera singer sing.

Lastly, in this pattern for total war there is that measure in dollars. Our direct expenditures for war this year will be three billion dollars.

I have given Canada's pattern for total war in its comprehensive scope of food, weapons, armed forces, and mobilization of man-power and money. I think I can fairly ask the house and the country to measure that program as it stands by the program itself as a whole. Will anyone in this house say that program is not worthy? Will anyone say that it will not tax our resources in this very year? Will anyone say that the commitment is not enough?

I have tried to portray very briefly and sketchily the development of Canada's program for total war, not as enforced by the brutal methods of a Gestapo, but through the wholehearted cooperation of a free people under the direction of a democratic government.

The Plebiscite

I want to deal now with the plebiscite. There are some who, as I intimated at the beginning, will insist on measuring our whole war activity by the one question, whether we are to have conscription for overseas service. But that is not the question. Here is the question, and mixing it up with conscription only adds to the disquiet and confusion. The government tells the people of this dominion that this is the time of greatest crisis in the world's history. The government says that it should be in a position to act in any emergency, and it considers that it ought not to be fettered

by past commitments. What the government asks is simply that it be put in a position to be free to act as the circumstances may require in the uncertainties and perils of the days ahead.

There does not seem to be anything morally wrong with that. It seems to be a straightforward course of procedure. But the real trouble is, that it is proposed by the Prime Minister, and to some people that stamps it as sinister. This was the issue that was raised in some of the elections yesterday, and particularly in some of the speeches in York South. The insinuation has been repudiated by the people themselves with an emphasis which no one can mistake.

I do not think this house ever heard a more frank discussion than the Prime Minister's explanation of why the pledge had been given. Among other things he pointed out, with the utmost candour, that the unanimity and speed with which parliament decided to go into the war and stand at the side of Britain could not have been achieved if that pledge had not been given. It was not a pledge on any minor matter. It was a pledge on a subject on which probably feelings are deeper and emotions run higher than on any other one subject in this country.

Members of the house know perfectly well that what the Prime Minister said was true. That was complete frankness, and the Prime Minister was equally frank when he outlined the reasons for considering that release from that assurance should be given in this time of peril. He described at length the critical position of our allies the world over and the new threats which had arisen. He concluded with these words:

In a world situation so involved, with enemies on every front, with no one able to say what the outcome of battle in other parts of the world may bring of immediate and increased danger to our own land, the government feels strongly that it should be perfectly

free to recommend to parliament whatever course of action it deems essential to the security of our own country and to the preservation of freedom in our own and other lands. . .

And he proposed to put this question to the people of Canada:

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?

There is nothing sinister about that. It is a straightforward laying bare of the situation. And it is in dead earnest.

I want to deal with just three points which have been made by those who criticize the government for proposing this plebiscite—although my colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Ilsley) has dealt with them so effectively and so conclusively that I almost hesitate to take the time of the house to speak of them again.

First may I refer to the objection that the plebiscite is unnecessary because the government already has a mandate from the people to wage total war.

I admit at once that the government was returned to power with a mandate to prosecute the war in the most effective way possible. But there was a restriction attached to that mandate. That is what is overlooked. The limitation arose from the fact that the government, in asking for support, had pledged itself through the Prime Minister that compulsory service for overseas would not be adopted. The national government party, through its leader, Hon. Doctor Manion, gave exactly the same pledge. That simply means—and the government was elected on that pledge—that the government's mandate was not unlimited; and, note this Mr. Speaker, that the position would have been exactly the same if Doctor Manion and his party had been returned to power. The mandate was to prosecute the war as effectively as possible.

but subject to this limitation, that the raising of men for overseas should be restricted to voluntary enlistment.

Somebody has said a bad pledge is better broken. But this was not a bad pledge. Surely the leader of the national government party, after consultation with his lieutenants, would not give a bad pledge. It was a pledge on a subject which had torn this country wide open in 1917. As I said a moment ago, it was a pledge on no minor matter. It was a pledge which had great effect, as the Prime Minister has said, in connection with this country's coming into the war with such unanimity.

So binding was the pledge regarded that when the government brought down the National Resources Mobilization Act, by which it was given the most complete power over the person and property of every individual in this dominion, it recognized the limitation imposed by that pledge, and inserted right in the act the condition that this power over persons and property was not to extend to the sending of men compulsorily for military service outside of Canada. The present leader of the opposition (Mr. Hanson) was in the house at the time; he took no exception to that limitation. His only suggestion was that the act might be extended to service in Labrador. And he and his party supported that measure with that restriction in it.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Did I not say I was prepared to accept that as a half-way measure?

Mr. RALSTON: I am quite satisfied my hon. friend used no such language.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I am quite satisfied I did. And I take credit for forcing the government to bring in the act—absolutely.

Mr. RALSTON: My hon. friend should not draw a red herring across the trail. He should look at the record, and he will find that his colleague, the hon. member for Royal (Mr. Brooks), suggested that the act be extended to Labrador, Iceland and Newfoundland, and that he himself suggested that it be extended to Labrador. I do not think he will find anywhere in his speech any suggestion that that was a half-way measure, or any suggestion that he was in any way opposed to that restriction being inserted as it is in the act to-day—with that exception. He and his party supported that measure without division and without adverse comment, too.

So much for the point that the government has a complete mandate to carry on the war. It has that mandate on every point except one, and that was regarded as so important—and I repeat it—as to be the subject of specific pledges of both major parties.

Then it is said that the government, in holding a plebiscite, is shirking responsibility and is trying to pass on to the people the burden of making a decision which the government should make itself. That objection is, in my humble opinion, absolutely groundless. Whatever objections there may be to the plebiscite, it is clear that shirking of responsibility is not one of them. If the government had asked the people to decide for or against conscription, that might have been claimed to be shirking governmental responsibility and placing the responsibility of decision on the people. If the government had stated its future policy in advance of the plebiscite, then the people might have said that the government was putting on the people the burden of deciding on a policy regarding which the government must be in a better position to judge.

What the Plebiscite Means

But the question in this plebiscite does not ask the people of Canada to decide for or against conscription—nothing of the kind. What it does do is to ask the people to put squarely on its shoulders—the shoulders of the government itself—the responsibility for deciding, subject to parliament, how men shall be raised for military service. That surely is not shirking responsibility or passing the buck or ducking the issue. The government is not asking the people to decide policy; on the contrary it is asking the people to let it decide policy. That is the very opposite of evading responsibility. What the government does is to state straightforwardly to the people of Canada that in this, the gravest crisis in the history of the world, it must have a free hand, regardless of past commitments. The plebiscite will decide whether the government's forthright statement of the dangers and its request for authority are to be heeded.

The other point is that the plebiscite means delay in carrying out the country's war effort, and this criticism is a prime example of the distortion which emanates from some quarters. It has been made to appear that Canada's whole war program depends on the plebiscite; that in effect all effort will be suspended for two or three months until the plebiscite result is known, and that not until then can Britain and our other allies know whether Canada continues to stand with them. This, Mr. Speaker, in my humble judgment is absolutely fallacious. The plebiscite concerns only one part of our war program. It does not concern the factories; it does not concern the navy or the air force. It concerns only the army, to the extent of overseas service.

No Time Will Be Lost by the Plebiscite

I have stated that the 1942 army program involves the raising of 90,000 to 100,000 men during the next fourteen months, for general service. That program is already under way. It has not been hindered in any way. During the last four months over 32,000 men enlisted for the army, and I am advised and believe that if the intake of men for general service keeps within reasonable distance of that general level we shall be able to carry out the 1942 army program for overseas, including the reserves regarded as adequate by both British and Canadian authorities in England.

In January we had the biggest enlistment we have had since the campaign in the summer. Some 11,700 men enlisted in the month. In addition to that, the calling up of men for training goes on, whether there is a plebiscite or not. No time is lost in that respect. Our training centres are full and will be kept full. The time which the plebiscite would take will have no effect whatever on that training. As a matter of fact we are having to add to our training facilities to take care of the increased enlistment and of the additional men we are calling up under the National Resources Mobilization Act. So that if indications mean anything the program will go forward, plebiscite or no plebiscite, and there is not the slightest evidence that the time taken for the plebiscite will hinder or hurt our army program.

Voluntary Enlistments

So much has been said, sir, about compulsory service that I want to say a word about voluntary enlistments. I want to see voluntary enlistments kept up. I believe it is better for our voluntary army if the men coming to reinforce it are also volunteers. I believe the public of Canada generally

wants to see enlistments kept up. In the midst of all this confusion and argument and bitterness, I am bold enough to make an appeal again to the house and to the people of Canada to make it their business as well as mine to keep enlistments up. It is a national effort, just the same as the raising of war loans. There everybody pitches in and tells people of the need, and helps to persuade them to subscribe. Surely it is even more important to help convince the men of Canada of the needs of the army. Canada's army is a force to be reckoned with. It is an efficient fighting machine, well organized, well officered and well manned. Canada's army holds a key position to preserve the security of this dominion. What we are proposing will add very much to its striking power. And we ought, Mr. Speaker, to be very much more proud of it than we seem to be. I want to ask everyone to recognize the gentlemen in battle dress. Along with the men of the navy and the air force, they are our first citizens. We should all be proud indeed of the response which has already been made by the young men of the country. It has been helped, I know, by the citizens' committees all over the dominion. They are composed, just as this house is composed, of those who believe in conscription and of those who do not, but they have sunk their differences to help Canada. I am more than grateful to them for what they have done in connection with recruiting and for the support which they have given to the officers of the department, both at headquarters and in the districts.

Here is the record. I have said already that 422,000 young men of Canada have voluntarily enlisted in the armed forces since the war began up to the end of 1941. Enlistments for the year 1941 alone were:

Navy	13,088
Army	99,803
Air Force	69,475

That gives a total for 1941 of 182,366 men who enlisted voluntarily in our armed forces.

An hon. MEMBER: In active service.

Mr. RALSTON: In active service. In January the total enlistments were:

Navy	800
Army	11,713
Air Force	5,772
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Total	18,285
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You can hardly say, Mr. Speaker, that the voluntary system has failed. Let us not forget that these enlistments have come not under the patriotic fervour which casualties produce, but at a time when because of comparative inactivity it was naturally harder to convince our people that the army needed men. We at national defence headquarters are going right on, and I ask most sincerely for the active interest of the members of this house and of the citizens generally to back up our efforts.

The Alternative

I have faith in the success of the voluntary method if we all do our part. With the background and traditions which this country possesses, and which it would be folly to ignore, I prefer the voluntary method if it works, and I shall do all I can to make it work. At the same time, we cannot know what is ahead and I feel impelled to say—here I can speak only for myself—that if the voluntary system does not meet the needs of the fateful days before us, then I shall feel it my duty as part of my responsibility to advocate the adoption of the other method.

I want to ask: what is the alternative to the plebiscite which those who complain about it would

suggest? What is the alternative to this plebiscite? I think it is suggested plainly that it is to put conscription into effect immediately, regardless of pledges and regardless of the way in which the voluntary system is functioning. My conviction is that an attempt summarily to put compulsory service for overseas into force, especially when enlistments are good, would obviously, apart from any pledge, have caused a deep and almost irrevocable breach in a country which up to the present has stood almost unbelievably united. And to do it in the face of the fact that the government was expressly pledged not to do it without consultation would only have deepened and widened that breach. I have seen the necessity for freedom of action, and I have seen the difficulties too. I have hoped that by asking the country for a release of the pledge in this time of crisis we would avoid disruption which would be sure to follow the breaking of the pledged word. I agreed to this plebiscite in that spirit. I believed that it was worth the time and effort and money which the plebiscite involved, to hold this nation together, not only for the future, but also for the present when Canada needs the combined strength and will and purpose of all her citizens.

This reference to the people is neither shocking nor sinister; it is a part of democracy. This request by the government to be relieved of restrictions will impress on Canadians everywhere the fact that Canada must be prepared to face effectively whatever comes. It will bring home to them the fact that this war is not just the war of Britain and the United States, of Russia and China and the united nations. It is Canada's war and the war of every man and woman in the dominion. Wherever they may be, our troops will be fighting for the safety of Canadian homes and for the security of our free institutions.

By this I mean, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, which we have enjoyed so long that we seem to have taken them for granted.

Common Danger Requires United Effort

I hoped devoutly that this method of approaching the matter would result in a united acceptance by Canadians of the possibilities which the war may involve; and in spite of the tumult and the shouting, I am not going to give up that hope yet. The winning of the war to avoid slavery must be the supreme consideration to all of us. The farther away from our shores we can keep the war, the less our peril will be. Our common danger requires us to work together for the safety of this dominion. We have too much to lose to pull apart now. Any honourable measure which will help to keep us together is worth trying if there is time, and I believe there is time for this. That is why I have agreed to it. That is why I support it.

We boast of being a nation. I believe that an affirmative answer to the question which will be put is necessary, not only to give the government the freedom of action which any government of a country at war in times like these must have, but also to meet the test of nationhood which we Canadians will face in these coming weeks.

Nationhood requires unity, and unity in Canada requires tolerance and confidence between the different races of which we are composed. The government, whether all citizens like it or not, is the only medium through which unity at this time can be expressed. It can be expressed in an affirmative answer to this plebiscite. Here is where we all can meet on common ground to put on the government the full responsibility for effectively prosecuting the war.

In the uncertain days which lie ahead, in this time of the gravest crisis in the world's history, I earnestly hope that my fellow Canadians, whatever their mother tongue, will curb extreme views on any side; will place on the shoulders of the government the responsibility which it is ready to take; will see the need to unite to meet a common danger, and will meet this test of nationhood and strengthen the common cause of our survival together as a free people.

*Issued by the Director of Public Information, Ottawa,
under authority of Hon. J. T. Thorson,
Minister of National War Services.*

Printed in Canada