

Freedom To Act, Symbol Of Democratic Gov't

Hon. Earl Rowe Expresses Views At
Shelburne Plebiscite Meeting

Over confidence has lost many a battle. The greatest danger that Monday's Plebiscite vote will not register a most emphatic "Yes" is possibly that so many appear absolutely confident that it will carry overwhelmingly. It is your responsibility to see that YOUR vote is cast.

To those who have still have any doubt about voting; who feel that such a vote should never have been put to the people of Canada; that the Government is evading responsibility; or that in some way or another the question is political, Hon. Earl Rowe, Federal member for Dufferin-Simcoe and one of the ablest members of the Opposition in Parliament at Ottawa on questions political, should erase any doubt in your mind regarding your responsibility. Mr. Rowe's address to the people of Shelburne last Friday night is his message to every voter in this riding. In his position at Ottawa he must have information not available to the average citizen, therefore every voter should read his address, which appears below, most thoughtfully.

Mr. Rowe's Address

"I thank you for the invitation extended to be here with you this evening and to discuss with the people of Shelburne and district this very important question that we, the people, are asked to vote upon on April 27th next.

The question as it will appear on the ballot is: "Are you in favor of releasing the government from any obligation arising out of any past commitments restricting the method of raising men for military service?"

To that question there can be but one answer! There are those who feel that this Plebiscite is entirely unnecessary and that it is merely an evasion of responsibility by a responsible government. There are others who ask the question, "What assurance does this give that the government will proceed with a vigorous prosecution of the war and take whatever action appears necessary in the light of facts as they may arise from day to day?"

Such questions arise not without some justification but I want to say here to-night, that I, for one, am

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prepared to let the past go until the future permits its review. I say that because I firmly believe that those who refrain from voting or who continue by their politics, to arouse racial or sectional differences, are in one way or another interfering with our concentration on winning the war.

The government has asked for this vote, and in a Democracy such as we still have here on this continent, it is your duty and mine to express our opinion by the only means we know, namely, the ballot.

The decision far transcends the bounds of political faith or party allegiance, because the Government of Canada is your government and mine. It may not be the political party of your allegiance, but whether you voted Liberal, Conservative, C.C.F. or Independent, the Government of Canada is your government and mine, alike.

Personally, I feel that we should, as a people vote YES and I am here to-night to urge you, and the people of the district to vote "Yes."

Under our democratic form of government the party in power should be free during its tenure of office to meet any emergency that may arise. They do not feel they have this power at the present time and are appealing to the people to be released from any prior commitments which might interfere with any necessary action which the situation might demand.

It is only right that any democratic government should be free to act on behalf of and with the faith of the people which it governs. Because, in the final analysis, the vitality of democracy must depend upon the faith of those who would conserve and strengthen its essential principles.

Your government has asked for that freedom. As citizens under a democracy we must do all in our power to see that they are given that freedom.

War to-day is an economic and social struggle as well as a conflict of arms. For this reason the concentration of responsibility coupled with a freedom of action must be extended. Today under the War Measures Act our government has the power to control imports and exports of goods and of money, to fix prices and control wages, to license the distribution and consumption of food fuel and clothing, and broadly speaking, to take almost any action,

circumstances might require. In the case of the method of raising men for military service, the government feels they have made commitments that may prevent or restrict them from taking such action as may be necessary.

This situation is not consistent with true democracy and is very dangerous to our welfare as a nation. In the great democratic republic to the south of us, who, like ourselves, are fighting for their very existence, the very first volume of their National Statutes gives the President the power to call forth the militia in whatever numbers may be required, should the United States be invaded or in imminent danger of invasion.

I have no desire to be an alarmist or cause any undue concern by any remarks I make, but I say to you in all sincerity, the danger of Canada being invaded is no less real than the danger appeared to Australia only a few short weeks ago.

Your Government asks you, on April 27, to give them that power, so that any action considered necessary in the light of developments may be taken immediately.

This is a war for our very existence. Either we win by making sacrifices now, or we lose and pay tribute in the future. The entire continent of Europe, which, a few short years ago, was composed of free

nations, is to-day the vassal of servitude.

Let it not happen here!

Let not a similar situation arise in Canada because you failed to vote "Yes" on April 27, or because you felt Democracy and Freedom were not worth going to the polls to support.

In closing, let me say to you—
"From falling hands they threw the torch, be yours to hold it high!"

Bradford Witness

April 29, 1942

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