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CANADA AND THE WAR

Canada's War Effort the First Consideration.

No government, charged with the duty of carrying on Canada's war effort, and, at the same time, the regular business of Parliament could, in addition, be expected to face two political campaigns—one carried on in Parliament itself before dissolution, another in the country after dissolution—and thereby almost certainly postpone the decision of the electors until the allied cause had reached a new and terrible emergency.

The responsibility for recommending the dissolution was mine. I took that responsibility in pursuance of my conception of my duty. I did so because I believed it to be right, and in the interest of this country. Above all else, I acted as I did in order that the unity of Parliament might be preserved in the eyes of the world.

I knew that a general election had to come—so did our political opponents. I believed that it ought, if possible, to be over before the spring offensive. I believed that it ought to be brought on before roads were broken up and became impassable. I believed that it ought to come before our men in England went to France. I believed it ought to come before our Second Division left this country. If Parliament had been permitted to carry on to the end of March or April, and had, thereby, rendered inevitable a general election at a time when our men were facing all the horrors of concentrated warfare, I would have been told, and rightly so, that I was not fit to be the leader of the government, for allowing matters to drift in that way.

Immediate Election Rendered Imperative.

The decision to dissolve was not the result of impulse. It was the inevitable result of the outbreak of a political and partisan struggle, combined with the factors of time to which

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I have referred. If there had been any hope of a brief session, calmly devoted to the discussion of national affairs, such a session would have been held. That hope disappeared with the resolution of the Ontario Legislature, which marked, and was intended as, the beginning of a political campaign. A general election this year being necessary under our constitution, I am sure you will agree that no time better suited to the needs of Canada and the allied powers could have been selected than the present. Once the stress of events had forced the decision, the straight-forward thing was to announce it at once, and to proceed with the election at once.

I am perfectly certain that from one end of Canada to the other there is thankfulness in the hearts of all that the country will not need to wait a day longer than is necessary for a new Parliament, in order that those who are charged with the responsibility of carrying on the great task of Canada's government in war may be fortified with a direct and unquestioned mandate from the people.

The Preservation of National Unity.

The first duty of any government charged with responsibility in this country is, has been, and will be to maintain national unity. That task, above all others, I have made the supreme endeavour of my public life.

Canada is a nation strong in the equal partnership of two great races. Through generations, men and women of many lands have come to share that partnership. No Prime Minister would be true, either to himself, or to the people to whom he is responsible, were he not to lend every effort of mind and of heart to the maintenance of national unity. Especially is this true at a time in the world's history when, over many years, we have been witnessing civil strife, and war between nations, in well nigh every quarter of the globe

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W.L.M. King Papers, Memoranda and Notes, 1940-1950,
MG 26 J 4, Volume 385, pages C269841-C270648

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