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Election Before the End of the War

Prime Minister Mackenzie King has legitimately tried to carry on the government without another general election before the end of the war. The signs are, however, that another election is inevitable. Mr. Churchill told the people of France last Saturday that it is possible the enemy will have been beaten six months hence. It could possibly take longer. It would be unwarranted complacency to figure on an earlier end of the war in Europe.

Preparations for the campaign next spring across the Rhine are doubtless already under way. German statements have lately been given out to lead the people of the United Nations to expect a winter offensive by the Allied forces, but Canadian readers are better advised to rely on the British prime minister's statement.

There will, of course, be fighting everywhere on the Rhine front through the winter months, but it would be vain to expect that the German army can be forced to fight in a final knock-out battle until the whole power of the Allied forces is brought to bear simultaneously from every direction on the Hitlerite stronghold.

The life of the parliament of Canada will expire next April. The government of Canada cannot long be carried on without money voted by parliament. Another session of this parliament could perhaps vote money to keep the government in office even after the mandate of the electorate had expired, but the Canadian prime minister is loyal to the constitution. He would never try to hold on to office by such an expediency.

A general election this winter has to be considered. Unless there is more confidence in the government than is at present being manifested throughout the country, the Liberal majority is liable to be wiped out. But there is no more confidence in the negative politics of the Conservative party: nor are many people likely to be imposed upon by the "Progressive" label attached to Conservative. Where Conservative candidates take an honest stand for conscription, they should win some seats; but nowhere in provincial elections, nor in federal by-elections, has

there been anything to warrant the expectation of a Progressive Conservative majority in the next general election.

Many people will vote C.C.F.—as much in protest against the negative politics of the other parties as for any other reason. Alberta is strongly behind the Social Credit provincial administration.

Presumably the impetus of the Canadian war effort will carry the nation on through the next six months or more, irrespective of a confused political situation. It would be healthier for Canadian nationhood, however, to have definite, forward leadership than confusion at the seat of government while the Canadian forces overseas are fighting in the knock-out battles of the sixth year of war with Germany.

Prime Minister King's government declared war in the autumn of 1939. The government's war record has been meritorious—excepting on the failure to lead the nation unitedly along the path of collective national service, as in the other great democracies.

There is little doubt that the nationwide demand for the selective draft to back the Canadian army overseas will crystallize into a national movement to form a national government. It could better be a national government formed before the next general election than in an aftermath of political confusion.

Even after the election, however, it is probable that the governor-general will again have to call upon the present prime minister to form the next government. Hon. J. L. Ralston is reported to be determined to retire from politics. He came back to be minister of finance at the beginning of the war only under the strong urge of patriotic duty. A similar urge could perhaps prevail again, but the necessary action to assure reinforcements to the Canadian army overseas will have to be taken soon to be most effective.

It is within the power only of the prime minister to initiate this action. He could call an early session of parliament, or ask for the nation's mandate through a new parliament, to employ the whole of Canada's trained manpower to back the attack in the decisive battles of the war within the next six months.