

*Dissolution of Parliament*

what he suggested was discourtesy on my part in not giving him a copy of the speech from the throne? He will realize that a speech from the throne containing a declaration of an immediate appeal to the country was a document which had to be kept very secret. Otherwise, as my hon. friend knows, the information would have been on the streets of this country before it was announced in parliament. That is the sole reason why copies of the speech were not given out before his excellency read the speech.

Mr. MANION: The right hon. gentleman merely adds insult to injury. He suggests that if he had given me a copy of the speech I would have blathered it all over the streets. As a matter of fact I have no doubt at all that the press had copies of the speech before it was read in the senate.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I will say that no one had a copy of the speech except His Excellency the Governor General.

Mr. MANION: I have no doubt at all that the press have copies of it now, while I have not.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Then instructions have not been carried out, which were that copies of the speech were not to be handed out until after it had been read by his excellency.

Mr. MANION: Yes, read by His Excellency the Governor General about three-quarters of an hour ago. I had not seen a copy, and that is why I had to ask Mr. Speaker to read the speech. However, that is a small matter, but it is just in line with all the other acts of the Prime Minister in this unprecedented action of his. He says, in his remarks, that the Canadian people have approved—according to his idea—the acts of this government. If the Canadian people have approved the acts of this government, why then this hurry for an election at this time? Why call a snap election on this group of two hundred and forty-five members, or thereabouts, who have come here from all parts of Canada, at great expense in many instances? Why snap an election in that manner? This is simply an attempt to take unawares not only this opposition but other opposition groups in the house.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I will tell my hon. friend the reason why I did not do so prior to the calling of the house was that I had given a promise it would not be done until the house had been called. I would have asked for a dissolution the night the Ontario resolution was put through had it not been for that.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

Mr. MANION: Is the right hon. gentleman telling me that he meant to put over a trick of this kind, and that he intended to do that at this time? Does he mean he would not call an election until the next session of the house or until another session of the house when he could put over a trick such as this? That makes it that much worse. The understanding was that the House of Commons would be called in regular session and that we would discuss the activities of the government, the effort of the government in the conduct of the war, and so on. If we had come here, as we have, and gone on for a few weeks, the Prime Minister might have decided that an election should be called; but to put over a political trick of this kind I say is disgraceful and is sneering at the political traditions of Canada and the British Empire.

If the Prime Minister had wished to do what he has done this afternoon, why did he not discuss the matter in confidence with me and with the leaders of the other parties in this house? That would have been the better course. I should like to ask the right hon. gentleman and the right hon. gentleman the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe), who sits beside him, both of whom have over and over again held themselves out as the great supporters of democracy, the great believers in democracy—I would like to ask these right hon. gentlemen this question: Where is the democracy in the present act?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I will answer the question; my hon. friend has asked it.

Mr. MANION: My right hon. friend has had long enough.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Let me answer it. Democracy does not mean I am responsible to the leader of the Conservative party or to the leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation or to the leader of the Social Credit group, but it does mean that I am answerable to the people of this country.

Mr. MANION: Through the House of Commons. The right hon. gentleman is answerable to the people of this country through the House of Commons.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: No, by direct approach to the people themselves, face to face with the problem.

Mr. MANION: Yes, in something like a fair manner, not by a piece of hoodwinking such as has been done to-day by calling the members of the House of Commons together, calling them from right across this country, having them here for a few hours, and then having them go back to meet their electors.

And this has happened after four months in which there has been the greatest degree