

the assistance of the Speaker to protect the minorities against the government. May I say to him that I am inclined to feel that the government may need the protection of the Speaker against the minorities. Seriously, however, I greatly hope that in this parliament at least we may not be as conscious of minorities and majorities as perhaps it has been found necessary to be in some previous parliaments, but rather that all may feel a profound sense of collective responsibility.

In this connection may I point out that the position of leader of the opposition is a most important one in the system of government as we have it under our constitution and is so recognized by statute. As hon. members are aware, the leader of the opposition holds a position which in degree of responsibility is, I should say, second only to that of the Prime Minister in the management of the affairs of the House of Commons.

Responsibility for government does not mean monopoly of government. In parliament, particularly in most critical times like the present, everyone can make some contribution to the needs of the day, and indeed will be expected to do so fearlessly and to the best of his ability. To a great extent an opposition can help a government in shaping the policies which may be best for the administration of public affairs. We shall not expect from the leader of the opposition the kind or degree of support which naturally we will expect from our own party. We will not expect to be exempted from criticism. Indeed one of the great functions of an opposition is that it may help to safeguard the proceedings of a government and that by its constructive criticism may prevent what might otherwise be in the nature of hasty or ill-conceived action, or what some might feel to be a lack of sufficient action.

We shall not expect, I say, to escape criticism, but I believe I am speaking for all hon. members when I say that I hope the house will be spared anything in the nature of recriminations. In the light of the great problems with which we are faced at this time, it would be our hope that criticism will be constructive.

In conclusion may I say that the co-operation which we believe we will receive from members in all parts of the house will be reciprocated in the fullest measure possible by the government. It will be our effort to work together in this House of Commons as one body of citizens who have, first and foremost in their hearts, the interests of their country, the interests of the great empire to which we all belong, the interests of free nations, and the interests of freedom throughout the world.

Hon. R. B. HANSON (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, at the very outset I desire to thank the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) for his kind personal references to myself. I believe no one recognizes more than I do his own limitations, but because it is the unanimous wish of my colleagues that I assume this important duty, after the fullest and gravest consideration I have agreed to accept the responsibilities that have been placed upon me. I shall endeavour to discharge the function of the leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition not only in accordance with the best of my ability but, I hope, in accordance with the highest traditions of the office.

As the Prime Minister has said, we are meeting under extremely critical conditions. The whole of the civilized world is in a turmoil. Members of that group of free democracies of which we pride ourselves we form a part, are being attacked in the most vicious and violent manner that can be imagined by the human mind. As the senior dominion and an integral part of the British empire, Canada, along with our mother country and our gallant allies, is being attacked. It is the duty of Canadians, the duty of this parliament, the duty of the government charged with responsibility for the time being and, as I conceive it, my duty as the leader of his majesty's opposition, to render to the cause of liberty and freedom the very best that is in us.

Canada's participation in this great conflict which, I fear, may grow successively worse instead of better, should be bound only by our limitations in men, in treasure and in concentrated efforts. That, in my opinion, should be our one and undivided aim in the course of this, perhaps the most important session of parliament in the history of our dominion.

Of course we shall want to know what is going on. We shall expect from the administration a full accounting of its stewardship during the past seven or eight months. The Canadian people are asking for that. I fear that they have been too complacent during the early period of the war. However, now that the shock of this tremendous conflict is being borne in upon them, and through them to us, they desire to know the measure of effort Canada is putting forth at this time.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I move that the house suspend its sitting until three o'clock this afternoon.

Motion agreed to.

At one p.m. the sitting was suspended until three p.m. this day.