

As I said at the opening of my remarks, matters connected with external affairs have not been discussed at any great length in the Canadian parliament. However, they have become more and more important, until now there is nothing much more important which could be discussed either in committee or in the house. The standing committee could get at the various facts in connection with the estimates. It could call officials of the department, and could hear witnesses. It could help to keep the Department of External Affairs more closely in touch with the Canadian people. There would be valuable training for the members serving on the committee and the result would be to help the people of Canada to understand and to follow external affairs better than they do at the present time. Further, if my suggestions were followed it might be possible to reach unanimity on many questions connected with external affairs. So that I repeat my suggestion that the government adopt the policy of referring estimates of the department to the standing committee on external affairs at the beginning of the session.

Those are the three questions that I have to place before the Prime Minister to-night. It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of external affairs. Twice in twenty-five years young Canadians have sailed from our shores to fight, and in many cases to die, because of issues that arose beyond our boundaries. They have had to do that in order to prevent war from approaching our land. I believe that if the Canadian people are told the facts, if they are given an opportunity to discuss and to understand the various issues, they will reach the right decision. But the leadership must come from the house itself. Therefore I suggest that in another session the Prime Minister see to it that more opportunity is given for a thorough examination of all questions having to do with external affairs.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Mr. Chairman, may I say to the hon. member for Vancouver South that I agree with practically all he has said this evening. Personally I am sorry that it was not possible to have these estimates brought down at an earlier time. I can give him an explanation which, however, he may regard as an excuse. The fact is that when I returned I found there was quite a lot to do. My hon. friend knows that part of the time was taken up with presiding at the dominion-provincial conference and studying questions in relation to it. He knows also that there were a number of very important measures which still had not been considered by the house, or if they had been considered, had

been considered only in one stage, and it was desired by the house to have them debated before anything else was taken up, or at least I so gathered. I met with the leaders of the three parties when I came back and we had a discussion as to how the business of the session should be arranged for the remainder of the session in order that we might get through about this time. In that discussion it was clearly emphasized that there were certain measures—for example, the emergency powers bill, the budget resolutions and other matters—which it was felt it was all-important should be dealt with by the house as soon as possible. I agreed to do all I could to see that those measures were brought forward as rapidly as possible. If I am not mistaken, I undertook to see that estimates which it might be requested should be brought down before others would be given priority. I do not recall any particular request that the estimates of external affairs should precede other estimates. I have been holding back, in part, to allow the business of the house to get along as rapidly as possible. I agree with my hon. friend that it is unfortunate that we should be discussing at this late stage of the session many matters that relate to external affairs.

I agree with my hon. friend that there is perhaps no more important phase of the government's work than that which relates to external affairs. I think he will agree that the importance of external affairs in the work of government has in Canada come to the fore very suddenly. During the period of the war there were strong reasons why we had to follow the course we did in regard to making our voice heard on many questions. I have said to the house that at times we found ourselves in an extremely embarrassing position. Decisions were being made by the Prime Minister of Great Britain associated with the President of the United States. Some of these decisions had to be made very quickly, and in a few instances we did not learn about them until after they had been made. But those cases were very few and there were good reasons for the haste that was required.

I had at that time to make up my mind whether I would protest each time we had been overlooked or whether I would look at the matter in a reasonable light and say, "Everything considered, as we are in a war, we had better allow this to pass without too much in the way of protest." But I can assure my hon. friend that there never was an occasion, while we may not have said much in the way of protest in public, that we did not place our position very strongly on record.

Coming to this present period, now that we are out of the war, I did as my hon. friend has