various parties in this house this afternoon upon this question of the union of Newfoundland with Canada.

It was suggested that, if there was any reason why any more time were required than would be available until March 31, after the discussion on the speech from the throne of all the various matters that were referred to by the hon. gentlemen who addressed you this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and the other matters which you or the Deputy Speaker, who sat in your chair, found it would not be in order to discuss at this time, parliament should have been called together earlier.

I would remind hon. members that the terms of union which have been tabled and which will be submitted to this house for its consideration—and, if it sees fit, for its approval—were not arrived at in one or two days. Long and protracted negotiations took place in order to settle those terms. Those terms had been preceded by a fairly full proposal arrived at after months of deliberation last year. After the proposal had been approved by a majority vote of the people of Newfoundland in a referendum, the precise terms were under discussion here for upwards of two months, and the terms were not finally signed until December 11. I was the chairman of the Canadian committee that had to do with the negotiations with the representatives from Newfoundland; and I regarded the completion of that undertaking as something of consequence to the people of Canada, yes, and possibly of consequence to the people of the world. I felt that, so long as there was any hope that we could get that agreement into shape to have it for submission at this fifth session of the twentieth parliament, it was worth while working at it. We worked at it until December 11, and on that date we put our signatures to the document, subject of course to ratification by parliament.

After December 11 it would have been rather difficult, and not very convenient for the members of this house, if an attempt had been made to get them down here before Christmas. They might have arrived two or three days before Christmas; but I do not believe, Mr. Speaker, that there are very many of them who would have felt at all kindly towards a government that brought them down here at that time.

Mr. Graydon: The government did it last year.

Mr. St. Laurent: The hon. member for Peel (Mr. Graydon) has been here for some time. He knows that parliament is not called to meet the day after the proclamation is issued. He knows that a reasonable time must elapse between the issuing of the proclamation and the meeting of the house. Between December 11 and Christmas there were just fourteen days, or two weeks; and it would not have been possible to bring hon. gentlemen down here at that time. While the negotiations were going on, the attention of many members of the cabinet was devoted almost exclusively to the discussion of these terms of union.

Mr. Fraser: To election work.

Mr. St. Laurent: I think the hon. member should try to be a little bit more serious in the interruptions he sees fit to make.

Mr. Fraser: I know they were in my riding.

Mr. St. Laurent: We are discussing a matter which has concerned the Canadian people ever since confederation was mooted more than eighty-one years ago, and it has now reached the stage where it will be the responsibility of the hon. member who is making these interruptions, among others, to say whether it should be completed or not. It is my responsibility. I will not shirk it, and I will not blush for the way in which I discharged it, in recommending to my colleagues the date for the opening of parliament. I submit that the course I followed was a reasonable one, and I am quite prepared at any time to leave it to the public of Canada to determine whether or not it was reasonable under those circumstances.

Mr. Graydon: Whistling in the dark.

Mr. St. Laurent: The next paragraph in the speech from the throne deals with amendments to the Supreme Court Act to make the Supreme Court of Canada the court of last resort for Canadians.

There have been suggestions that this is something which constitutes a threat to the autonomy or liberty of the provincial governments. I had a compilation made of what has been happening in that regard for the last ten years. I asked for ten years but I got it for eleven. It is given from the year 1938 to 1948 both inclusive, and, unless my counting is wrong, that is eleven years. There were fifty-five cases in which appeals were asserted, or sought to be asserted, from judgments of the Supreme Court of Canada. In one case the appeal was withdrawn. In five the appeals were allowed. In forty-nine cases the appeals were dismissed and the judgments of the Supreme Court of Canada were affirmed. In no one of the five cases in which the appeals were allowed was there any constitutional issue between the dominion and the provinces. That is the record for the last eleven years in these fifty-five times