

unfounded and irresponsible charges. We were convinced, however, that the needs of Canada and her allies had imposed upon us for more important tasks than the waging of a political campaign in Parliament, and a continuation of that campaign a few months later in the country.

Striking vindication of democratic government.

I do not think I should let the present occasion pass without citing for you the opinion, on the dissolution, of the best known authority on the constitution of the British Empire and responsible government in the Dominions. That authority is Mr. Berriedale Keith, of Edinburgh University. I quote from a letter written by Mr. Berriedale Keith and published in "The Scotsman" of Edinburgh, on January 27th, two days after the dissolution of our Parliament. It reads: "It cannot be said for a moment that any unfair advantage is being taken. Mr. King is simply availing himself of the earliest possible moment to secure the authority of the electorate for the concentration of Canadian energy on winning the war. He could not have dissolved sooner, for time was necessary to conclude the air training scheme and to organize the military forces. The episode should be treated in its true light, the most striking vindication of democratic government in the British Commonwealth." This, I believe, ladies and gentlemen, will be the verdict of history.

Reasons for an election in time of war.

Criticism of the dissolution has, from the beginning, been voiced by those who were disappointed and frustrated by the unsuccessful attempt to prolong the life of Parliament with the object of forming a union government. You will recall how many were asking: "Why have an election at all in time of war?" Perhaps you have been among the number who

have felt that an effort should have been made to continue Parliament in existence indefinitely. Parliament could only have been kept in existence beyond five years by over-riding the Constitution, and by depriving you of the right to choose whom you wished to manage your affairs in time of war. Had members of the House of Commons joined in extending the life of Parliament, without authority from the Constitution or from you, they would have completely usurped all your rights and powers.

Abraham Lincoln faced with a similar situation.

Abraham Lincoln, at the time of the great civil war, was faced with the problem of an election in war time in circumstances even more difficult. The Constitution of the United States for a presidential election every four years. The Civil War began in April, 1861. The presidential elections were due in November, 1864. Lincoln had to decide whether he and his colleagues would override the Constitution and extend their own term on the pretext that the Constitution was not framed to cope with civil war. Lincoln maintained that failure to hold the elections would be an admission that the rebellion had succeeded, and that America's free institutions had already been destroyed in a war for freedom. "We cannot", he said, "have free government without elections." The elections were held. Lincoln and his government were returned, and the world was shown that, even in the midst of a civil war, democracy and freedom could be maintained.

Chapters in the history of democracy.

I venture to say that when Tuesday next is past, it will be the proud boast of the people of this country, if not indeed of the whole British Empire, that Canada has added another chapter to the history of democracy in the new world. For