

are engaged in the war. The term of the present Parliament expires this coming autumn. It has invariably been the practice of preceding Governments to dissolve Parliament and bring on a general election a very considerable time before the expiration of the life of Parliament. Since Confederation the practice has been to dissolve Parliament in the third or fourth year of its term. In very exceptional cases has Parliament continued to the fifth year. In anticipation of this practice being observed by the present Government, criticism in the press and otherwise has been very strongly expressed since the declaration of war in 1914 against a general election being held. Very naturally a difference of opinion has existed amongst the supporters of the Government on this very important subject. A very influential section naturally took the ground that since the accession of the Government to office it has been called upon to assume such extraordinary obligations, financial and otherwise, inherited from the late Government, in the carrying out of those two great railway enterprises the National Transcontinental and the Canadian Northern, that the assumption of those obligations warranted the Government in making an appeal to the country for a mandate as to the course they should pursue touching those subjects. Following upon this came the war in which we are now engaged, and which necessarily involved Canada, not only in enormous expenditure, but in the adoption of a policy concerning which the Government would be unquestionably justified in seeking from the electors confirmation of the policy which they have adopted. On these three questions alone the Government would have been warranted in making an appeal to the people. On the other hand, a very large section of the people have taken equally strong ground that under no consideration would the Government be warranted in plunging the country into a general election at a time when we had assumed such responsibilities and were facing all the consequences of a war. Strong reasons can be readily advanced in support of either position. In view of the expiration of the life of Parliament during the approaching autumn, no other alternative presents itself than for the Government to make preparation for the dissolution of Parliament or to throw upon Parliament the responsibility of extending its life for

such a reasonable period as to carry us over the probable continuance of the war. In deference, therefore, to public opinion the Government is prepared to submit to Parliament a measure providing for an extension of the life of Parliament. In deference to public sentiment which has been very strongly expressed upon the subject I have no doubt Parliament will not hesitate to accept the responsibility which conditions have cast upon them, and thus relieve the Government from the necessity of following the practice which invariably has been adopted of dissolving the House at an earlier period than the effluxion of its time, and thus avoiding the holding of a general election while engaged in the serious and lamentable business of war.

Reference has been made in the speech from the Throne to the all absorbing question of the war with Germany. This is the third session since the declaration of war that we have been called upon to deal with the subject. When Parliament met in August, 1914, immediately after the declaration of war we were hopeful of a reasonably early termination. We then had certain anticipations as to the extent to which we should participate. These anticipations were largely based upon the signs which were then apparent. Even Great Britain herself at that particular time seemed not to realize the magnitude which it has since developed. The war since that date has spread to an extent which could not have been anticipated. It has not only convulsed the whole of Europe but has extended to the Orient. Since that period it has taken in Turkey, Italy, the Balkan States and Japan, until at the present moment nearly the whole of civilization is involved in a cataclysm of strife such as history has never known. No good purpose can be served in discussing at the present moment the causes which have led to this frightful convulsion in our twentieth century civilization. The greatest and most important question that we are facing is to properly realize and to perform our duty at this most critical time in our existence.

There seems to be an impression in the minds of some that we have entered into this war voluntarily and without cause; that it was purely a matter of choice, and that we were free to elect whether we should or should not engage therein. Happily this view is confined to a very limited sphere of public opinion, and there is the general recognition of the principle and the fact that when the Empire is at war Canada is