

provides a limit beyond which the term of Parliament may not run, but having regard to the rights of the people the parliaments of Great Britain have for the most part found it desirable and necessary to exhaust only about one-half, some of them two-thirds, of the full period which the constitution allows.

Take, next, the history of our own Parliament since Confederation. In Canada, notwithstanding the 5 year limit fixed by the British North America Act, the duration of the several Parliaments since Confederation, has been as follows:

The 1st Parliament dissolved July 8, 1872, 4 years, 9 months, 15 days.

The 2nd Parliament dissolved January 2, 1874, 1 year, 4 months.

The 3rd Parliament dissolved August 17, 1878, 4 years, 5 months, 24 days.

The 4th Parliament dissolved May 18, 1882, 3 years, 5 months, 27 days.

The 5th Parliament dissolved January 15, 1887, 4 years, 5 months, 8 days.

The 6th Parliament dissolved February 3, 1891, 3 years, 9 months, 28 days.

The 7th Parliament dissolved April 24, 1896, 4 years, 11 months, 30 days.

The 8th Parliament dissolved October 9, 1900, 4 years, 2 months, 26 days.

The 9th Parliament dissolved September 29, 1904, 3 years, 11 months, 20 days.

The 10th Parliament dissolved September 17, 1908, 3 years, 11 months, 18 days.

The 11th Parliament dissolved July 29, 1911, 2 years, 10 months, 20 days.

The 12th Parliament (the War Parliament) dissolved October 6, 1917, 6 years, 3 months, 17 days.

The 13th Parliament, until February 14, 1921, 3 years, 3 months, 27 days.

The seventh Parliament ran to within one day of the time limit. There was in power at that time a Tory administration like the present, which was doomed, and the members of which knew it. I suppose my right hon. friend and his colleagues, being similarly situated will regard this as the precedent they should follow and will endeavour if possible to hold out, not to the last day but one, but the very last, if that is at all possible. The Thirteenth Parliament, this present Parliament, has lasted for three years and three months; it has already lasted longer than some of the other Parliaments which have assembled in Canada. The Parliament that was dissolved in 1908 lasted for three years and eleven months; the Parliament that was dissolved in 1911 had lasted for only two years and ten months.

These figures afford ground for some interesting reflections. In the first place, it will be observed that this very Parliament has already had a longer existence than the Parliament which was dissolved on July 29, 1911. The late Right Hon. Sir

Wilfrid Laurier had the same legal rights under the constitution as my Right Hon. friend. He had a much more powerful following in Parliament. His appreciation of the spirit of the British constitution and his sense of public duty and obligation to the electorate were, however, a little higher and keener than those of my right hon. friend. He recognized the rights of the people as superior to those afforded his Government under the constitution. He believed that Government should be carried on only with the consent of the governed. He dissolved Parliament to afford to the people their constitutional right of passing upon a great issue which was an issue other than that of the elections of 1908.

It will be further observed that the existing life of this Parliament, joined to that of its predecessor, already comes within less than three months of exhausting the time limit of two consecutive Parliaments enjoying the full length of term permitted by the constitution: also that, already, it is within less than a year and three months of the duration of the preceding three Parliaments of the Liberal Administration.

When it is recalled that since 1911 the people of this country have had no opportunity to pass upon distinctly Canadian issues, and that in the interval men who fought for their country overseas have been denied all privilege of even hearing these issues discussed at a general election, that only a fraction of the women of the country have had a voice in government though all have since been admitted to the franchise; that hundreds of thousands of citizens were disfranchised in 1917; and that practically all young men between the ages of 21 and 31 have never yet had opportunity of recording their votes with respect to matters of vital domestic concern, the injustice to the electorate, of attempting further to prolong the life of this Parliament, must be apparent to all.

If we are to have regard for the spirit of the constitution, rather than the letter, it is perfectly clear that it is the rights of the people, with respect to important national issues, which is the determining factor in deciding the length of time for which a Parliament should sit—issues upon which a ministry has been returned to power, and new issues upon which the people have a right to be consulted, and to make their will known. Clearly, the spirit of the constitution demands at the present time, both as respects the issue upon which the Government of 1917 was