

There are few men in this parliament for whom, in some particulars, I have greater respect than the leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. I admire him, in my heart, because time and again he has had the courage to say what lay on his conscience, regardless of what the world might think of him. A man of that calibre is an ornament to any parliament. I do not know what my hon. friend's views will be. He and I have talked over these matters at different times. I know he feels deeply that anything in the nature of war should not be countenanced at all. But I said to him the other day—and I wish to repeat it here: When it comes to a fight between good and evil, when the evil forces of the world are let loose upon mankind, are those of us who believe in the tenets of christianity, and all that christianity means and has meant to the homes and lives of men, in the present and through generations in the past—are those of us who have reflected with reverence upon the supreme sacrifice that was made for the well-being of mankind going to allow evil forces to triumph without, if necessary, opposing them by our very lives?

I believe the present conflict, in essence, to be just that very thing. I think this world year in and year out, age after age, has had forces contending for supremacy. They have been the forces of good and the forces of evil. To-day those forces are locked in mortal combat, and if we do not destroy what is evil, it is going to destroy all that there is of good. And what then is going to become of this world as a place in which to live?

I am inclined to agree with hon. members when they say that force qua force has never accomplished anything—and yet I am not so sure of that. I believe that force does not fundamentally change a situation, and that the only thing that in the end will change a situation is persuasion. You can persuade men; you can convert them, but there have been times—and history is there to record them—when, if force had not been opposed by force, there would have been no christianity left to defend.

I believe I have already expressed my thanks to the mover and the seconder of the address to his excellency in reply to the speech from the throne. I should like again to say how deeply I, and I am sure all hon. members in the house, appreciate the constructive nature of the eloquent and memorable speeches each made at the beginning of this historic debate.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps I may now be permitted to give to the house an outline of the developments which have taken place

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

since parliament prorogued, and in particular a statement in greater detail than it has been possible to make it up to the present time of the government's position.

When I came into this house to-day I felt so fatigued that I was not confident of my ability to speak extemporaneously. Hon. members will realize at a time like the present, how great is the responsibility for every word that a member of a government uses. There is a special responsibility, perhaps, in every word uttered by one who holds the office of Prime Minister. If at times I have been silent and seemed to be shirking responsibility in not discussing every point that has been raised, it has been because for the last three years I have been living with this awful dread of war. I have wished that no word of mine might add fuel to the flame which I feared some day might blaze throughout this world.

By way of introduction to what, as leader of the government, I feel it my duty to say with respect to the momentous events which have occasioned the summoning of this special session of parliament, I cannot perhaps do better than to recall, as concisely as I can, the European situation as it existed at the time the present administration came into office, and refer more particularly to the grave developments which have occurred since parliament prorogued and also to the steps taken by my colleagues and myself to meet the appalling responsibility which was thereby placed upon our shoulders.

I need not tell hon. members that the sense of impending calamity was not something which was realized all of a sudden. Three years ago the government indicated its belief in the necessity for preparedness by asking parliament substantially to increase the amounts required for the defence services of our country. I frankly confess that from that day to this the possibility of a war in which Germany or other nations would be engaged, and which might spread to all parts of the world, has absorbed more of my time and thought than all else combined. Particularly have I been concerned with the position of our own country in the event of Great Britain becoming again engaged in war. I have not concealed my conviction as to what I feared might occur. Time and again when my own followers have been discussing with me many matters of major and minor importance, I have urged upon them the wisdom of keeping constantly in mind the terrible possibility of international conflict, before which all else would soon pale and be forgotten.

I have been taunted by friends and opponents alike in giving far too much of my time and thought to foreign affairs, and