

lovers of liberty and freedom. I have before me a statement made by President Abraham Lincoln concerning the question of having an election in war time. President Lincoln in the time of his administration was faced with a problem much more critical than any problem with which we in Canada are faced at this moment; it was that of having an election at a time when his whole country was divided by civil war. Lincoln had to ask himself the question whether he should take advantage of some means whereby he could extend his term and the term of his government, or whether the people should be given the right which is always theirs of saying periodically who should carry on their government. I should like to read what President Lincoln had to say with respect to the election which took place under his administration during the period of the civil war. I read from a volume entitled, "Abraham Lincoln, Complete Works," comprising his speeches, letters, state papers, and miscellaneous writings; edited by John G. Nicolay and John Hay. The volume I have in my hand is one which was given to me by Lady Laurier. It was taken from Sir Wilfrid Laurier's library after Sir Wilfrid's death. These are the words Lincoln used in responding to a serenade which took place on November 10, 1864. They will be found at page 595 of volume 2:

If the loyal people united were put to the utmost of their strength by the rebellion, must they not fail when divided and partially paralyzed by a political war among themselves? But the election was a necessity. We cannot have free government without elections; and if the rebellion could force us to forego or postpone a national election, it might fairly claim to have already conquered and ruined us. The strife of the election is but human nature practically applied to the facts of the case. What has occurred in this case must ever recur in similar cases. Human nature will not change. In any future great national trial, compared with the men of this, we shall have as weak and as strong, as silly and as wise, as bad and as good. Let us, therefore, study the incidents of this as philosophy to learn wisdom from, and none of them as wrongs to be revenged. But the election, along with its incidental and undesirable strife, has done good too. It has demonstrated that a people's government can sustain a national election in the midst of a great civil war. Until now, it has not been known to the world that this was a possibility. It shows, also, how sound and how strong we still are. It shows that, even among candidates of the same party, he who is most devoted to the Union and most opposed to treason can receive most of the people's votes.

Mr. Speaker, when at previous sessions we were considering the possibility of this country having to decide the part it would take should a great war come in Europe, as the

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

leader of the Liberal party and the leader of the present administration I took the position very strongly, time and time again, that parliament would decide that question. I was told from many sides that it was ridiculous to think of allowing parliament to decide the question of peace or war, that the war would speedily assume proportions which would make impossible anything in the way of parliamentary discussion. I gave my word to the people of this country that parliament would decide, and that the extent to which Canada would participate in the war would depend upon the decision of our own parliament and the provision that parliament might make. I kept my word in that regard. Parliament did decide—it gave its decision in no uncertain terms, and gave this government the means wherewith to carry on Canada's war effort. Now we are confronted with a situation in which our strength is being impaired by those who seek to create in the public mind distrust concerning both our ability and our patriotic efforts. There is only one national authority higher than parliament; that is the people themselves whose servants as members of parliament we all are. Just as I was prepared to trust parliament to make the decision as to Canada's participation in war, so I am prepared to trust the people with respect to the all-important decision as to what government is to administer their affairs during the years in which this war may be waged and probably be concerned with the terms of peace.

It is not an easy or light responsibility, Mr. Speaker, which my colleagues and I have at this time and have had during the past four or five months—yes, and I might well say during the last few years. We are in the midst of the worst situation this world has ever known, and I am afraid that the situation is going to get worse and worse. No one can say how long this war will last. Those who seem to be best informed tell us it is not going to be one year or two years; it may be three years; it may be longer than that. As respects the countries that may be drawn into the conflict, there appears to be a danger of the war spreading over vaster areas than were ever thought of before it began.

So may I say that if we have to carry the grave responsibility of office in war and at a time of war such as the present, then we must be fortified by the voice of this country, expressed in no uncertain terms. If there is any group of men more capable of carrying on Canada's war effort and likely to do so more effectively, then the people should have the right to entrust them with that great