

May is the time when a large percentage of the people in the cities move from one location to another, so that if proper lists were to be in existence, there would have to be a further revision of lists at that time. If you go past that time, it takes you into the month of June. For many reasons, I do not think it is advisable that we should wait until June for a general election.

May I give what I regard as the strongest reason for having an immediate election. The one thing that has caused me more anxiety than anything else, with regard to the question of having a general election, is what may happen at the front while an election is taking place. I have had to face, and my colleagues have had to face, the probability of a great offensive on the western front taking place in the spring. I say that if it is possible for this country to have its general elections over before a great offensive takes place, or before the worst of the fighting in Europe takes place, then it is entirely in the public interest that this should be done. There will be very heavy problems to consider at that time. Once the war "begins in earnest", as people are saying, there will be tremendous problems to consider, and the government that has to deal with those problems must have to no uncertain degree the confidence and the backing of the people of this country.

Now I hope hon. members will realize that what I am proposing at the moment is not to extend my time of office, or that of my colleagues, but solely to allow the people of this country to say, as they are entitled to say, whom they wish to carry on their government during this very critical time. If I were seeking to extend the time of the present administration or to extend my own time as leader of the government of this dominion, then I might be open to criticism from hon. gentlemen opposite and from opponents in different parts of the country. But when I am prepared to entrust my political future and the political future of this administration—not merely prepared but anxious that it should be entrusted—to the voice of the people of this country, no criticism can be raised against an intent of that kind.

One other point. The taking of the military vote is an important matter in connection with an election in war time. I think this country still has vivid recollections of how that vote was taken in the last war. We do not want any more occurrences of the kind. We want a perfectly straightforward and honest expression of opinion from the military forces; they are, if anything, more entitled to it than any other class in this country. May I draw attention to this: That vote can, I believe, be taken while the first

division is still in England, before its members may go to Europe, if an election is brought on before May. Though as to this I cannot, of course, say. If delayed, the soldiers' vote will certainly have to be taken while they are fighting on the continent of Europe, which would present a very different situation. This government intends, as all hon. members know, if it is returned, to see that this first division is reinforced in strength from month to month and week to week, but it also intends to see that a second division is sent overseas as soon as may be possible. Now that second division, the men who are likely to go in it and form part of it, are in this country at the present time; they can still be in the country during a political campaign if the latter is held immediately. I ask if it is not fairer to them, if it is not better for everyone, that while they are still in a position to exercise the franchise in their own land, they should have their right to record their vote with respect to the government that is to carry on when their lives are at stake?

Mr. CAHAN: Does my right hon. friend intend to introduce legislation to that effect?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: My hon. friend will himself see just how advisable that would be. I may say to him at once that the government intends to make provision for the military vote being taken overseas, and will do that under the War Measures Act as a most necessary war measure.

Mr. MANION: That is the way Hitler would do it.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): Hitler does not take any vote.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: One word further in regard to the holding of an election at this time. My colleagues and I have realized, as perhaps no others could possibly begin to realize, how important it is that we should begin immediately to prepare for post-war problems. Parliament should be in a position to deal not merely with the immediate problems of war, but also with those problems which will arise as soon as the war is over and even before. Measures such as the unemployment insurance legislation should be passed as speedily as possible. I ask hon. members: Do they believe it will be possible for these measures to be put through except by a parliament that comes fresh from the people with a mandate to carry on the government and enact such necessary measures?

May I conclude what I have to say as to the significance of an election in time of war by quoting a passage, the value of which I think will be appreciated by all those who are