

visit of their sovereign. . . . It was a source of satisfaction to my government that his majesty was able to give the royal assent in person to the bill respecting the Canada-United States trade agreement.

In addition to these references to their majesties visit which appears in previous speeches from the throne there will be found repeated references in *Hansard* by myself and others to that memorable occasion. It is a pleasing coincidence that it was just a year ago this very weekend Their Majesties the King and Queen were in this capital city. If I recollect correctly, it was just a year ago to-night the members of both houses of parliament had the great honour of having the king and queen as their guests at a parliamentary dinner. I agree with my hon. friend when he says that the visit of the king and queen to Canada was one of the happiest events in the whole of our history, happy in the rejoicing it occasioned in all parts of the dominion and, above all, happy in that it served to reveal the affectionate regard in which their majesties are held by their Canadian subjects and the loyalty of the Canadian people to the crown. Further, it helped to reveal the unity of the Canadian people under the crown.

My hon. friend has been good enough to speak in kindly terms of such part as I may have had in extending on behalf of the Canadian people an invitation to their majesties to visit Canada. In doing that, I was but taking advantage of one of the high privileges which belongs to the responsible position I now hold and which I had been privileged to hold in some previous years. I believe it was in 1923 or 1926, when I was attending an imperial conference, that, through His Majesty King George V, I extended an invitation to have the Duke and Duchess of York visit Canada at an early opportunity. I now recall that that invitation was extended shortly after the occasion of their marriage. On a later occasion while in England on other business I repeated the invitation, and at the time of the coronation, when the responsibility was that of their majesties themselves, I pointed out how delighted the Canadian people would be should their majesties find it possible to visit our dominion. At that time I received from the king the assurance that the first opportunity their majesties might have to leave England on an extended tour would in all probability be given over to a visit to our country. When Lord Tweedsmuir subsequently went to England for a brief stay, His Excellency carried with him from the government a renewal of the invitation, the acceptance of which was definitely given for the following year. As I have stated pre-

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

viously, no words of mine could begin to express all that the royal visit meant at the time or what it continues to mean at this time, when it is the desire of members of the British commonwealth of nations to show their united strength under the British crown.

My hon. friend has referred to the loss our country sustained in the passing of Lord Tweedsmuir. At different times I have publicly expressed the sense of that loss, as I believe it was felt by all our people. I would add only this, that I believe no sovereign ever entrusted a great mission to a more faithful servant and that no prime minister ever had a more helpful counsellor or a truer friend than I had in the years it was my privilege to share with His Excellency in the affairs of the public life of our country.

May I add that with the leader of the opposition I am pleased to join in expressing the great pleasure it has given the people of Canada to know that Lord Athlone and the Princess Alice will shortly be in our midst. Their close relationship to the royal family will still further serve to keep fresh in our minds many memories which will always be cherished of the visit of the king and queen. With a knowledge of the part played by Lord Athlone in the years during which he was Governor General of South Africa I think we may regard ourselves as very fortunate that one who has so intimate a knowledge of constitutional matters and has had such a wide experience in public administration is to be the successor of our late Governor General.

My hon. friend has spoken about the general election. I had intended at this time to omit altogether any reference to that subject. Anything I now have to say in that connection will be exceedingly brief, because I have no desire to revive past political controversies. What I would like to say however is that, irrespective of party, we have reason to feel a definite pride in the strength of our democratic institutions when we reflect that in a time of war it was possible for Canada to carry through a general election, and in so doing to preserve inviolate the right of the people, within stated periods of time, to select anew their representatives in the parliament of the country. By many during the campaign, and to some degree this afternoon by the leader of the opposition, I have been censured for having brought about the dissolution of parliament at the time it was done. I ask hon. members this question: In the light of what has since occurred, is there a single hon. member who does not feel that it is a very fortunate thing that at this time of concentrated warfare we have a new parliament, assembled here with an emphatic mandate

from the country to carry on Canada's war effort to the utmost of our might and power? Can any one imagine in what condition this country would be if we had continued with the old parliament, a parliament which at the very opening of its last session, despite the existence of war, began its duties in a spirit of party controversy? What would have been the condition to-day if partisan discussion had been continued in parliament for months, and the election been longer delayed? Imagine the confusion we would have if a general election were taking place at this time!

When I asked for dissolution I said it was the duty of a prime minister to take all circumstances into consideration and to have regard for what was likely to happen, as well as for all that had happened. I shall not repeat the immediate reasons which brought on the election, but I would remind hon. members that I said I thought it was advisable that the election should be over before concentrated warfare began in Europe. I said it would be advisable to have the election over before the great offensive which I believed would pretty certainly come in the Spring. I pointed out that our soldiers overseas should have the opportunity of casting their ballots if possible before going to the front, and that those in Canada should be permitted to vote before going overseas.

A prime minister at all times must shoulder heavy responsibility and that responsibility is particularly heavy in a time of war. He has a very special responsibility with respect to a dissolution of parliament. He has to advise as to what is most in the interests of the nation. If he fails so to do, he must bear the consequences of that failure. If I had the whole matter to do over again, in the light of what has since happened, I would, if anything, do it more readily than I did the last time. I know my hon. friends opposite were disappointed. My hon. friend said that when he heard the radio announcement he felt he would like to have assassinated me. I have no doubt he felt that way, and I think there were a large number in his party who felt the same way. But I was not thinking of him or of the Conservative party at the time when I advised dissolution. I was thinking of what

was most in the interests of Canada at a time of war, and what the people of this country would expect. All circumstances considered, I think I have been pretty well justified in that action by the verdict which the people of Canada have given with respect to it.

My hon. friend has spoken about unemployment insurance and has said that he thinks the time difficult for us to carry through such a measure at the present session. He said that we ought to know, or at least he would like to inquire as to what would be the probable response of the provinces with respect to this proposal. He mentioned that for many years we have been seeking to get through an unemployment insurance measure, but may I remind my hon. friend that the present administration or rather a Liberal administration many years ago introduced an unemployment insurance act. It was a Liberal administration that put that act upon the statutes and it has been there ever since. It was a Liberal administration that increased the scope of the act as originally passed.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): That was the Old Age Pensions Act.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The Old Age Pensions Act.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): That is a horse of another colour.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: We placed the Old Age Pensions Act upon the statutes. I beg my hon. friend's pardon. What I had in mind was social legislation generally. The Old Age Pensions Act was the first step in meeting the situation which arises from unemployment. Elderly people are the first to suffer lack of employment. What we as a party have been seeking ever since is authority to enact a federal measure which would make unemployment insurance applicable to the whole dominion. It has been felt, and rightly I think, that until we had reason to believe that the provinces generally were prepared to give that authority to this federal parliament, the government would not be right in proceeding with such a measure.

I am sure the members of the house will be pleased to know that the government has received the assurance of practically all the