

*Dissolution of Parliament*

Apart from that, however, may I say there are very strong reasons—and they are set forth in the speech from the throne—why it is in the public interest, in the interest of the country, and in the interest of the allied powers, if we are to have an election, as it is now perfectly evident that we must have, we should have it just as soon as possible, and have it over at the earliest moment.

In the first place, as indicated by the speech from the throne, this is the sixth session of the present parliament, one session having been a special one. This parliament was returned in 1935 and this is 1940. That in itself, in my opinion, is the strongest reason why there should be an election at this time. Some may say that this was not the case with Sir Robert Borden; that this was not the view that he took. Sir Robert Borden's government was returned to power in 1911 and war came on in 1914. Sir Robert had been in office for only three years, and there were the most cogent of reasons why he should carry on. He had still another two years before his term would be completed. Our situation, however, is quite different. As everyone knows, this is the last session of this parliament. When the time came for dissolution as fixed by the constitution, Sir Robert Borden found difficulties in the way, because of the stage to which the war had advanced, of giving to the people the right to which they are periodically entitled of declaring to whom they wish to entrust the management of their affairs, and this at a very critical time. There is, therefore, the strongest constitutional reason why we should meet the country just as soon as we possibly can.

But I would mention another circumstance. Had I thought that it would have been in the interests of the country so to do, I would have gone to the people immediately after the last special session in order that those charged with the great responsibility of government in war time might have a direct and unquestionable mandate from the electorate. I realized at that time, however, that it was necessary that Canada's war effort should be gotten under way as expeditiously as possible, that the country should be changed as speedily as possible from a peace-time to a war-time organization, that all necessary military and economic measures should be taken without delay. Once those measures were under way it was clear the situation would be entirely different. Fortunately, in the months that have elapsed since the special session, the government has been able to organize Canada's war effort and to do so very effectively. We have brought into the public service, irrespective of the parties to which they

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

belong, key men who, I believe, enjoy the confidence of the people generally. We have formed the necessary boards to deal with the different war activities. All the work of organization with respect to the army, the navy and the air force has been admirably initiated and developed. The first Canadian division is now in Great Britain and the British commonwealth air training scheme is under way. We have just carried through, in the course of a day or two, our Canadian war loan, so that provision is made from that source for the financial needs of the country for the next considerable period of time. In connection with economic, financial and military affairs the basic work has been successfully planned and accomplished and the officials of the permanent service are at this moment in the best position—a better position than they are ever likely to be in at any other time—to carry out further development while a political campaign is in progress.

May I again ask hon. members this question: If an election is to take place, is it not wise to have it just as soon as we possibly can?

Miss MACPHAIL: In the winter?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I will answer my hon. friend's question in that regard. What about the men who are fighting overseas? What about the military forces everywhere? They have to face the winter.

Miss MACPHAIL: I should like to see them drive over the roads.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I have considered that question carefully and I think my answer will appeal to my hon. friend as well as to others. I am told by the chief electoral officer that an election will take nearly eight weeks. Provided we have a dissolution in the very near future, we might have the election over before the end of March. Before the end of March the roads will not have been broken up.

Miss MACPHAIL: They will be piled up, fence-high.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I do not care what time of year an election is held, there will always be some objections to consider. If you have not an election before the roads begin to break up in the month of March, and if you are considering in the matter the physical condition of the country, April will not be a month for an election, nor will May—May, more particularly, for the reason that if you start the election before May you will have to have the lists prepared before that month; and as everyone knows, the first of