

MR. LAPOINTE...This is a war parliament. This government has received a mandate to lead the country in this struggle for freedom and peace. Up to this stage of my remarks apparently everyone has agreed with me, but I am afraid I am now entering another field where there may be some disagreement. Suggestions have been made in this house by hon. members for whom I have the greatest respect, and similar suggestions have appeared in certain newspapers, that we should change the complexion of this government and have what is glorified under the name of "national government." I feel it my duty to express my views frankly and respectfully, but firmly. Perhaps I am more at liberty to speak than other members of the government because I would gladly give up my own place to someone else if that were the better course to pursue. I feel sure that those who know me well, realize that it is only a sense of duty that keeps me in the position I now hold.

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.....The Prime Minister has no mandate to form such a government as is suggested. Indeed, he has a definite mandate against forming such a government; and if the opposition was pressing this request, I know of only one way of meeting it: Let the people decide. Do the people want it? Surely a new election would be unthinkable. Then why try to divide Canada by pretending to unite it? Why throw this apple of discord into our national arena?

My province is unanimously opposed to the proposal. The mere mention of the name "union government" brings forth painful memories which it is almost a crime to resurrect at this time. I speak very frankly. I do not feel that I could sit in such a government if I were asked to do so and represent my province. Frankly I say and I believe, and I think others will believe, that I cannot do it and no other man can either. Do you not think, Mr. Speaker, that anything which would destroy the unity of our country could be called an act of sabotage? In a democracy the designation of the rulers of those who are to be governed is and must be made by the vote of the people. I beseech the promoters of this scheme - and I know they are anxious that Canada should give its best war effort - to let well enough alone. I implore them not to undermine the confidence of the people in their duly and freely elected rulers.