

Obvious advantages which have followed dissolution.

The people of Canada have been enabled, in the past eight weeks, to hear the issues fully discussed at a time when the allied war front in Europe has been comparatively quiet. What is even more important, if the present administration is returned, the government itself will, without further interruption, be in a position to give its whole time and attention to the prosecution of Canada's war effort. Are we not fortunate indeed that the men in our fighting forces have already cast their ballots, and that the election will be over before the intensity of wholesale and concentrated warfare descends upon Europe. If I had not acted as I did, I would, at this moment, have been rightly receiving the strongest condemnation for failing to foresee the consequences of delay. And I would have been properly blamed for those consequences.

Highest interests of the people served.

I now ask you whether the interests of the people of Canada have not been better served by my action in accepting the challenge, immediately the efficiency of our war effort was called into question. The dissolution may have upset the well-laid plans of men more concerned with their own personal and political advantage than with Canada's war effort. But, since there had to be an election this year, I am confident that the people of Canada will rejoice when this campaign is ended, and they have returned, as I believe they will, a strong government backed by an unquestioned mandate—a government able and anxious, once again, to give its full and undivided attention to the winning of the war.

I knew that by dissolving Parliament I was subjecting my colleagues and myself to attack. I knew that, in the campaign, our opponents would make a hundred irresponsible and reckless charges while we were replying carefully and accurately to one. If there was any political advantage in the dissolution of Parliament, it was not an advantage to the Liberal party or to the present administration; it was an

advantage to our opponents. Had we kept Parliament in session we could have replied fully and completely to their unfounded and irresponsible charges. We were convinced, however, that the needs of Canada and her allies had imposed upon us for more important tasks than the waging of a political campaign in Parliament, and a continuation of that campaign a few months later in the country.

Striking vindication of democratic government.

I do not think I should let the present occasion pass without citing for you the opinion, on the dissolution, of the best known authority on the constitution of the British Empire and responsible government in the Dominions. That authority is Mr. Berriedale Keith, of Edinburgh University. I quote from a letter written by Mr. Berriedale Keith and published in "The Scotsman" of Edinburgh, on January 27th, two days after the dissolution of our Parliament. It reads: "It cannot be said for a moment that any unfair advantage is being taken. Mr. King is simply availing himself of the earliest possible moment to secure the authority of the electorate for the concentration of Canadian energy on winning the war. He could not have dissolved sooner, for time was necessary to conclude the air training scheme and to organize the military forces. The episode should be treated in its true light, the most striking vindication of democratic government in the British Commonwealth." This, I believe, ladies and gentlemen, will be the verdict of history.

Reasons for an election in time of war.

Criticism of the dissolution has, from the beginning, been voiced by those who were disappointed and frustrated by the unsuccessful attempt to prolong the life of Parliament with the object of forming a union government. You will recall how many were asking: "Why have an election at all in time of war?" Perhaps you have been among the number who have felt that an effort should have been made to continue Parliament in existence indefinitely. Parliament could only have been kept in existence beyond five years by over-riding