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I think if we are going to remain in the League we ought as a country to take the work of the League very seriously. We ought first to have a Department of External Affairs that is not headed by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King), speaking on this matter the other evening said, and the leader of the opposition (Mr. Bennett) agreed with him; that he would have to know what went on in that department, and with that I agree; still if that department were headed by a person who specialized in international matters, his consultation with the Prime Minister would make it a stronger department than it could possibly be when headed by an altogether overworked man, as the Prime Minister of Canada must be. So I think we should have a Department of External Affairs with a minister at its head apart from the Prime Minister.⁽¹⁾

Mr. King's Continued Retention. (Views in 1943-44).

Mr. King continued to retain the External Affairs portfolio, despite the heavy burden upon him, throughout the Second War. In justification, he explained his view, in the middle of the war period, on July 12, 1943, when the House of Commons was in Committee. He said:

May I take advantage of this moment to explain why, to put it in a direct way, I myself have retained the position of Minister of External Affairs while holding the office of Prime Minister at this time of war. I can assure hon. members ... that it has not been through any desire on my part to carry the extra portfolio. I would point out that in time of war nine-tenths of the Prime Minister's work is related to external affairs, and it would be making his task in some ways more difficult were he to try to assume the responsibility of the office of Prime Minister without being responsible as well for external affairs, when practically every decision of vital importance at this time, which has to be made by the Prime Minister, is one that is related to external affairs or would have to come as a recommendation from a minister of external affairs.

I am perhaps stating this in an exaggerated way, but it is impossible to separate the two at

(1) H. of C. Debates, March 2, 1936, p.679.