

*The Address—Mr. Mackenzie King*

meeting, a meeting at which the question of sanctions was to be discussed. But first let me say that I believe when parliament is in session the first duty of the Prime Minister is to parliament. I have not found it possible to be in the house every day of every week when parliament is in session, for the entire time of each sitting. I have tried to be here for the question and answer period, following the practice of the prime ministers in England. But I have not stayed in the House of Commons all afternoons and listened to all debates because there are many matters which have to be considered by the Prime Minister which cannot be taken up unless he has the time to do it. And the only time which presents itself is such time as he can make for himself while other business is proceeding. I have kept an eye on the business of the house and have tried to see all the members I could, and I have tried to get through all the work I could which was most pressing.

In the year I have mentioned there was the question of attending the League of Nations. I felt it was my duty to attend at that critical time; it was after the Abyssinian episode. Events even then were shaping towards the state of affairs which have come about recently. I went to the league assembly and placed frankly before the different countries Canada's point of view. I think what was said at that time was more important to the constituency of Prince Albert or to Victoria or Vancouver or Halifax, or to any other constituency in Canada than anything I could have done by way of travelling and speaking across the country. We have far too much travel and talk these days on the part of many people—far too much of it, and from too many sources. The difficulty to-day is to get time quietly to think about the great problems which confront this and other countries.

The next year it was my duty after a parliamentary session to attend the coronation of their majesties in Great Britain. I may be wrong, but had I not attended the coronation I question very much if their majesties would be visiting Canada this summer. I believe I am right in making that assumption. I should be sorry if the visit of their majesties in Canada will not mean much more to the people of the dominion than anything I could be saying in any part of the country. At the time of the coronation there was also an imperial conference which it was my duty and which I had the honour to attend, and in the proceedings of which I participated as completely as possible, again with more

advantage, I believe, to Canada than had I been travelling about and speaking in different constituencies.

It is quite true that this year I did not get away to the west, including my constituency, as I had hoped I might be able to do. It was a bitter disappointment to me. But it was no fault of my own—yes, it was a fault of my own. I was confined to my bed for a month during the summer, from what?—the effects of exhaustion, fatigue, nothing but that, seeking, though confined in that manner, to do the best I could with respect to many matters which were before me, and from having had on my mind for the last year or two what I dreaded above everything else, namely the possible developments which would involve this and other countries in a war. I ask this house to-night: Was I right or wrong in believing that the nations were nearing a stage where another world war was about to take place? I say to hon. members I have a two-fold duty. I am holding not merely the office of Prime Minister, but also that of Secretary of State for External Affairs, which is equivalent to that of a foreign minister. In the nature of things a foreign minister and Prime Minister must give his attention to matters which are of greatest importance to the world. I wish that shadow had passed. I wish all of us in the house to-night could feel secure as to what may take place in the course of this very year. May I add this: If he is going to deal intelligently, carefully and thoughtfully with the problems facing the world and Canada to-day, in relation to what may take place in the next few months or before this year is out, the Prime Minister of Canada cannot be going back and forth across the country making political speeches and making personal appearances before local audiences. He has this House of Commons to speak in. What better forum is there in the world? He has the radio to speak over. Is it not much better to give a few nation-wide addresses in carefully chosen words than to be giving the kind of oration to which we have listened this afternoon and tonight?

Let me say only this in conclusion: The position of the leader of a government in Canada to-day is not unlike that of the captain of a ship when the ship is in a storm. The captain of the ship must not be spending his time wandering among the passengers on the decks; his place is at the helm. Mr. Speaker, I intend to remain at the helm of this ship of state just so long as I have the confidence

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

MATTHEW GATTEAU