

I have had the honour of representing those very people in this parliament. I imagine that if the votes could have been separately identified it might have been found that there were more votes cast from those of German descent than from those of the English or any other race, to send me to this parliament, with the opportunity soon after to become a minister of the crown. In anything concerning it that I may have to say, I am not going to be false to the views that I hold with respect to peoples so greatly affected by this conflict.

May I say further that when I was privileged to receive from Harvard university some forty years ago a travelling fellowship to study abroad in Europe, I spent a part of a year in the city of Berlin in Germany. I lived with a German family, the family of a noted artist in the city of Berlin, and at that time I came to see a good deal of the German people. Since then I have visited Germany on other occasions and I believe I know something of its people. But I know something also of what tyranny means in the world; I know something of the price at which freedom has been bought, and I am not going to be false to my whole inheritance by refraining to take any step that may be necessary to preserve freedom.

I never dreamed that the day would come when, after spending a lifetime in a continuous effort to promote and to preserve peace and goodwill in international as well as in industrial relations, it should fall to my lot to be the one to lead this Dominion of Canada into a great war; but that responsibility I assume with a sense of being true to the very blood that is in my veins. I assume it in the defence of freedom—the freedom of my fellow countrymen here, the freedom of those whose lives are unprotected in other communities and countries, the freedom of mankind itself.

The leader of the opposition has said that on his part there will be no political manoeuvring at this time, no captious criticism. I am quite sure that no one in this house has in his thoughts to-day anything of that kind; surely no one is thinking about any manoeuvring in the face of a situation such as that which now confronts us. My hon. friend need not have told me that he had no thought of that kind in his mind. I know him too well not to appreciate the fact that he would be the first to wish to drop political strife. May I thank him at once for being one of the first, without waiting for parliament to assemble, to come forward and assure me that he was at the side of the government in helping to meet this grave crisis.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

There is one small thing I should like to say to my hon. friend, because it may help to remove any misunderstanding that may exist between us. He seems to have felt that at one time I had not consulted him as much as I should have done, that I had not consulted him as the Prime Minister of Great Britain had consulted the leaders of other parties. If my hon. friend will parallel the circumstances he will see, I believe, that my action has followed very closely that of the Prime Minister of Great Britain. The Prime Minister of Great Britain called a conference of leaders when he was deciding the question whether parliament should be summoned or not, no doubt to give them information in his possession. Until we knew here that the British parliament was about to be summoned the necessity for a conference had not arisen. The British Prime Minister just the day before the British parliament was summoned to pass an act for the defence of the realm did call into conference the leader of the Labour party and one or two others. The day before the British parliament met, the very night that word came over the cables to me from England that the Prime Minister of Great Britain had decided to call parliament, I immediately asked one of my secretaries to see that the leader of the opposition was asked to come and meet me on the following morning. It was after ten o'clock at night that I received that word and I was then leaving for Toronto to attend the funeral of my late friend Senator O'Connor, at which I was to have been a pall bearer. I hesitated to cancel that engagement until I was certain that there was grave danger threatening and that it would not do for me to be away. That word came in a subsequent dispatch. I cancelled the trip and on the following morning when my hon. friend did not appear, and I received word that he was not in the city but in Toronto. I telephoned to him at Toronto and informed him of the serious conditions which had arisen. I told him what the news was so far as I had received it and said that I should be glad to show him the dispatches I had received. I said that they were there for him to see if he would come down. He spoke of engagements he had and asked whether I thought it was imperative for him to come. If I had doubted my hon. friend's loyalty, if I had thought that there would be delay on his part in sanctioning what the government was proposing to do, I would have told him it was important that he should come. I told him as best I could over the telephone what the situation was, and without doing more I felt every security in going ahead in a belief in his complete acquiescence as respects the measures that we have taken.