

*Dissolution of Parliament*

is required to elapse between the date of dissolution and the day of election. I had felt that possibly we might get over the difficulty of having such a long interval while war was on and parliament was not in session, by shortening the time in which there would be no parliament through an amendment to our elections act to reduce the period in which the country would be without a parliament to something like four weeks. I spoke to my hon. friend the leader of the opposition about that prior to the special session of last year. I should have liked to introduce such a measure at that time, but I gathered from what he said to me and from what others have said, that the introduction of any measure to amend the elections act would be certain to create some suspicion in the minds of some hon. members and to provoke a kind of discussion that would not be advisable.

Mr. MANION: If the right hon. gentleman will permit me to interject, I should like him to take his own responsibility for his acts and not try to put it on other people.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I am going to take full responsibility, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. MANION: Then take it.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I thought I had done my hon. friend a courtesy in mentioning that I had talked the matter over with him before the last session and that he had given me his view that it would be unwise to attempt a measure of that kind.

Mr. MANION: The right hon. gentleman told me that he was going to bring it in at this session of parliament. I pointed out that such a period would not give a leader time to cross this country, and my right hon. friend's reply was, "Why should a leader cross this country?" So far as bringing in such a measure last session is concerned, there was no discussion.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Possibly there may be some misunderstanding in the mind of my hon. friend as to just what our conversation was. At any rate he is quite right when he says that he had mentioned to me, as one of the reasons why it would not be advisable to try to shorten the period for the election, that the leader would wish to take seven weeks, at least, in discussing issues before the electorate in the country. However, my hon. friend has made quite clear his own point of view, which is that he should have a period of something like eight weeks, because that is about the time required under the act, to address the electorate in a period of a general election.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

If that is the case, it demands consideration at once of just when a dissolution should take place which will involve a campaign of something like eight weeks, and controversy on electoral matters throughout that period of time, at a time when the country is in a state of war and Europe is in the condition which we all know it to be in to-day.

But I am getting away from what I had wished to make clear to the house, which was that I had hoped there would be a feeling of sufficient confidence in the present administration, and an evidence of sufficient unity between all parts of this country to have enabled us, at a session at this time, to introduce a number of measures and then to go to the country a little later on. Until a week or two ago—indeed, until a week ago—it was my intention that this should be the procedure. But, as hon. members know, just a week ago to-day, or yesterday, the premier of the largest province in this country—

Miss MACPHAIL: A Liberal.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: —introduced in the Ontario legislature a resolution which was directed in no uncertain terms at the government of Canada now administering its affairs. That resolution was seconded by the leader of the Conservative opposition in the Ontario legislature; and when it came to a vote, the resolution was supported by all of the ministers of the Ontario government who were present in the house at the time, by some of the members of the Liberal party in Ontario, and by all of the Conservative members in the legislature. The resolution had been preceded by some discussion in the legislature—a discussion which had taken place, I think, for a couple of days—attacking the manner in which this government has sought to administer the affairs of the country during this period of war. I think I would have paid little or no attention to that discussion had it been confined to the leader of the government of Ontario and to the leader of the opposition of Ontario; I would have allowed it to pass, and not made further mention of the matter other than to discuss the merits of any points which might have been raised in the discussion. However, when the Ontario legislature adopted the resolution and it was given a permanent place on the records of the legislature, quite a different situation presented itself to this government. May I read the resolution?

That this house has heard with interest the reports made by the prime minister and the leader of the opposition of the result of their visit to Ottawa, to discuss war measures with the national government and this house hereby endorses the statements made by the two members in question and joins with them in regretting that the federal government at Ottawa