

the burden has been a little too heavy, and for permitting that perhaps no one is to blame more than myself. I have hesitated repeatedly to ask this house to enlarge the staff of the Prime Minister's office. I carried on through the war with the position of Secretary of State for External Affairs because I felt that at that time it was better in every way that the two positions should continue to be combined. I have never regretted that course because I was and am sure it was the right one. Immediately after the war there were many questions that arose out of the war which still had to be dealt with and for a time I continued to hold that office as well as the office of Prime Minister. But I can assure my hon. friend and others that it was not through a desire to hold on to too many offices. I was anxious to prepare the way to be free of one office that I had held over so many years so as to retain, with more in the way of freedom, the office of prime minister.

As a matter of fact, if I had consulted my own personal wishes, in 1945 immediately after the election I would not have waited until the present to give up the leadership of my party. I would have given it up a year or two sooner than I am now proposing to do except that I gathered from my party, particularly from my followers in this house and the ministers around me, that they hoped I might continue to hold office still for some time. Indeed I can say to my hon. friend that I know of nothing of which I shall be prouder for the remainder of my life than the fact that if it were a question tonight as to whether I should continue on through the remainder of this parliament and through another general election I would be given by the members of my party in this house and in this country well nigh unanimous support toward that end.

I have felt that the time has come when someone else should take over the duties and the office of leader of my party and of Prime Minister. I feel that I have done my full duty and my part. For some time past I have made it quite clear that having received the leadership of my party from the party itself I intend to ask the party to allow me to return to its members the trust they placed in my hands, and which I shall have held for twenty-nine years when the convention takes place on August 5, 6 and 7. I shall still for a short time remain in the office of Prime Minister. When I will give up the office of Prime Minister will depend upon circumstances that may exist at the time of the convention as they may relate themselves to the immediate future. In addition to other things it will depend upon the wishes of whoever may be chosen to succeed me in the leadership

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

of the party and what may best suit his convenience. I have made it quite clear right along that while this would be the last session in which I would appear in this house as leader of the government, I did not mean to give up the leadership of the government the moment I gave up the leadership of the party.

Only a few weeks ago I made a statement in the presence of the press and many members of this house that it might be two or three months after the convention before I would be giving up the position of leader of the government. I mentioned one or two things that I had then in mind. The obligation with respect to retaining office is one that I owe to the crown. How long I shall continue to exercise it will, as I have said, depend upon circumstances which I shall have to consider carefully. These circumstances, at present unknown, will help to determine the advice I shall give the crown as to whom my successor should be, and as to the time at which the advice should be tendered. Much, of course, as I have said, will depend upon the wishes of whoever may be chosen as leader of the party at the convention, and upon conditions that may be existing in other parts of the world as well as in our own in relation to great matters of state consideration of which no Prime Minister dare shirk in times like the present. I wish to make it quite clear however that I shall not be appearing in this house as leader of the government at its next session.

Before leaving office there are one or two things I should like to say about the Prime Minister's office. I hope that in subsequent sessions for my successor, whoever he may be, more provision will be made than has been made in the past for the Prime Minister's office. If one looks at the estimates he will see that the staff of the Prime Minister's office is quite small. It is practically what it has been over many years. An explanation of that is that it has been and still is in large part associated with the office of the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the office of the President of the Privy Council. The duties and responsibilities of both those departments of government have grown tremendously within recent years. The Department of External Affairs has become one of the great departments of government and certainly demands all the time that a minister can give to it. The Prime Minister's office still has the advantage of close association with the Department of External Affairs in the matter of recruiting from that department a part of its staff. At the present time some members of my staff really belong to the Department of External Affairs, having