Our duties as subjects of His Majesty the new king cannot, I conceive, be more clearly expressed than in the language which His Majesty used both on the occasion of his accession to the throne and in his New Year's address. In acceding to the throne he said:

I meet you to-day in circumstances which are without parallel in the history of our country. Now that the duties of sovereignty have fallen to me I declare to you my adherence to the strict principles of constitutional government and my resolve to work before all else for the welfare of the British commonwealth of nations.

With my wife as helpmeet by my side I take up the heavy task which lies before me. In it I look for all the support of all my peoples.

But more significant are the words used in his New Year's message:

Throughout my life it will be my constant endeavour to strengthen the foundations of mutual trust and affection, on which relations between the sovereign and people of the British Empire so happily rest. I ask your help toward the fulfilment of this purpose, and I know that I do not ask in vain. . . . My wife and I dedicate ourselves for all time to your service and we pray that God may give us guidance and strength to follow the path that lies before us.

Mr. Speaker, is it too much to say that each of us as a Canadian, each citizen of this vast empire, in whatever part he may find himself, should dedicate himself to the service of his country even as the king and queen have dedicated themselves for all time to the service of their peoples. With that I leave the subject, for I am conscious that there must be and will be an earnest desire and effort on the part of all to render to the state, in these troublesome times, such service as will accord with the declaration of His Majesty.

I cannot, however, permit this matter to pass without making at least one observation that arises out of certain discussions which have taken place, both in and out of this house. Respectfully I suggest that the statute dealing with the succession has not been altered. I have no hesitation in saying that had I occupied the position which the Prime Minister now occupies I should have taken exactly the course he took in dealing with the problem which he had to meet.

I think it might be well to look at the language of the statute before we conclude too hastily that there has been any change in the law affecting the succession. The statute is short, and in order that there may be no misapprehension as to the position which I suggest is the sound one I may perhaps read it:

Whereas His Majesty by his royal message of the 10th day of December in this present year has been pleased to declare that he is irrevocably determined to renounce the throne for himself and his descendants and has for that purpose executed the instrument of abdication set out in the schedule to this act and has signified his desire that effect thereto should be given immediately.

And whereas, following upon the communication to his dominions of His Majesty's said declaration and desire, the Dominion of Canada, pursuant to the provisions of section four of the Statute of Westminster, 1931, has requested and consented to the enactment of this act, and the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand and the Union of South Africa have assented to (the enactment of this act).

Be it therefore enacted by the king's most excellent majesty by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal and the commons in this present parliament assembled and by the authority of the same as follows:—

1.(1) Immediately upon the royal assent being signified to this act, the instrument of abdication executed by His present Majesty on the 10th day of December, one thousand nine hundred and thirty-six, set out in the schedule to this act, shall have effect and thereupon His Majesty shall cease to be king and there shall be a demise of the crown—

This is the part to which attention should be directed:

—and accordingly a member of the royal family next in succession to the throne shall succeed thereto and to all the rights, privileges and dignities thereunto belonging.

(2) His Majesty, his issue, if any, and descendants of that issue, shall not, after His Majesty's abdication, have any right title or interest to or in the succession to the throne, and section one of the act of settlement shall be construed accordingly.

Not modified, but construed.

(3) The Royal Marriages Act of 1772 shall not apply to His Majesty after his abdication nor to the issue, if any, of His Majesty or descendants of that issue.

Now, having read that statute, I think it is only necessary to direct the attention of the house to the fact that it constituted an acceptance of the resignation of office by His Majesty the late king. We call it in technical parlance his abdication, but we had no precedent for abdications and as to the implications of them, and the statute, in order that there might be no doubt in the matter declared that there was a demise of the crown. The king was dead.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): Hear, hear; that is right.

Mr. BENNETT: The king was dead. And from that there followed, not a new law of succession, not a new method, but the application of the provisions of the act of settlement by which the Duke of York, being then heir to the throne by the death of the then king, succeeded as George VI. That is the position.

Then, further, the statute merely declares that it should be thus construed. That is