

except our own. The preservation of national unity has been made increasingly difficult in our country as, from time to time, demands have been made upon my colleagues and myself for unconditional declarations of participation, by Canada, in European conflicts, before the actual time, occasion, or nature of the conflicts themselves were known. This impatient and extreme course of procedure served only to bring into being contending forces in every part of Canada: one determined that Canada should participate in any and every war in which Britain might be engaged, and, the other, equally determined that there should be no Canadian participation in any European wars.

Once again, I ask you to consider where Canada would have been at the outbreak of the present war in Europe, if I, or any of my colleagues, had identified himself with either of these extreme attitudes; or if, through unwise and unnecessary declarations in advance of an actual and known condition, we had helped to precipitate an open conflict of opposed opinions?

#### Efforts to Maintain Peace in Europe.

I have long held the belief that conditions in Europe could not continue to go, as during the last four years they had been going, from bad to worse, without the moment coming when Europe itself would burst into flames and freedom everywhere be menaced. Holding that belief, I have done all that was within my power, and have sought to have done all that was within the power of this country, to avert such a catastrophe by fostering, everywhere and always, policies of international understanding, friendship, and good-will. At the same time, I have had continually to face the prospect of the failure to maintain peace. I have also had to consider the possible coming of the day when Britain and France

might be drawn into a great conflict for the preservation of their freedom and, indeed, of their very existence. I have had, all the while, to ask myself how best our country could be kept united, and its policies so shaped that, if the moment ever came for Canada to declare what part she was prepared to take in a world struggle to thwart aggression and to preserve freedom, she could speak with the single voice of a united people.

#### Efforts to Preserve Unity in Canada.

I think I know something of the love of liberty which resides in the breast of every Canadian. I think I know something, too, of what men and women, of every part of Canada, of every class, and race, and creed, feel they owe to the manner in which their liberties have been secured under British institutions in our free association as a free nation in the British Commonwealth. I have, therefore, never doubted the singleness of mind and purpose with which we would all be prepared to play our part in any struggle which threatened our freedom. My task was to see that no false step, no extreme policies or measures, no hasty action should be allowed to destroy, in advance, either the clearness of vision of our people, or its power for action. I was determined that, if the moment for decision ever came, no cleavages of opinion, in Parliament or in the country, should frustrate Canada's power to put forth her utmost effort.

The only absolute proof of any course of action is to be found in its results. You will recall my repeated assurances that Canada would participate in war only after a decision by Parliament or the people; also, my refusal last year to allow a general election to be brought on in July or August, though strongly pressed by the Leader of the Opposition, and many of my own following, to dissolve Parliament at