

**The Stress and Strain of Leadership**

The second World War lasted two years longer, and was on a scale much vaster, than the first World War. Had the war against Germany and the war against Japan been brought to a close before the date for the general elections of 1945 had been fixed, and had time permitted the choice of a new leader for that campaign, I would not have hesitated to advise the Party at that time, that, my years of life and of office being what they then were, I felt my task had been completed, and that in the interests of all concerned the responsibilities of Party leadership should be entrusted to another. Well, it is now over two and a half years since the last general elections. Should I be spared to lead the Party for another six months, three years will have elapsed since the end of the second World War.

Knowing something of what the six years of war, and the years of uncertainty immediately preceding, had involved of stress and strain, and knowing as well the demands political campaigns make on one's energies and strength, I stated at the commencement of the last general election, and repeated at different times in the course of the campaign, that, come what may, the general election of 1945 would be the last general election in which I would lead the Party.

**The length of Leadership**

I have, as you know, for the same reason, made similar statements from time to time, both to our own Party organizations, and in public. I should not like now to be accused of never having meant what I said: to have said what I said for what might be termed party political reasons. These are not the kind of tactics, I had ever resorted to in the course of my public life; nor are they the means by which I have come to enjoy the trust which the Party still holds in me as its Leader. I have sought to be perfectly frank in what I have had to say to the party and to the public. I have also tried, at all times, to look ahead.

The one thing which I would dislike more than anything else, after the years I have had of Party leadership and of office, is that I could ever be accused of having held on to the position of leadership to what might be termed "the last moment", and then, whatever the circumstances might be, to have it said that I had "let the Party down", so to speak, because of not having let the Party know, sufficiently in advance, of any fears I might have entertained of finding myself unequal to the tasks of leadership in a nationwide political campaign.

**The decision to call a Convention**

I need scarcely say that my decision to ask for the calling of a convention for the purposes I have mentioned is not a recent decision, suddenly reached in the light of any new situation which has arisen either in Canada or in any part of the world. Much less is it a decision based on any change of attitude toward myself on the part of my colleagues in the government, the Liberal members of the two Houses of Parliament, or the Party throughout the

country. It is true, I believe, that while I have very great reason to congratulate myself upon having had the unbroken support and confidence of all these constituent elements of the Party, ever since I was chosen leader in 1919, I have never enjoyed that confidence in fuller measure than I do today. This is a reward of years of public service which nothing else can equal.

I must confess that, over the two and a half years since the last general elections, I have continued to enjoy powers of endurance which, at many times in the past, I had not felt I had a right to expect. That I enjoy the measure of health I have at the moment is, I recognize, due in no small measure to the consideration shown my years by my colleagues in the Cabinet, and by my fellow Members in Parliament, and I think, I should add, by the Canadian public. This, however, is a consideration which, in the Party's interests, and in the public interest, I have no right to expect to have shown indefinitely. At the end of the last session of Parliament I saw only too clearly that I should not continue to delay in the calling of a convention, and so informed my colleagues in the Cabinet.

**Selection of Party Leader should be by a Convention**

The life of a Parliament is five years. Assuming that a general election were not to take place before the expiration of the life of the present Parliament, that would leave to a newly appointed leader but two years before he would have to undertake a nationwide campaign. In some respects, that is a short enough time. It is, however, by no means certain that the government would wish to wait until the expiration of the life of the Parliament before seeking a renewed expression of the people's confidence. It has seemed to me, therefore, that the selection of a new leader of our Party should not be further delayed.

I should like to see the new leader of our Party chosen, as I, myself, was chosen at a National Convention by representative members of the Party throughout the country, as well as by its representatives in Parliament.

The planning and arrangements of a National Convention are not something easily brought about. In a country the size of ours, it requires a certain amount of time. Knowing this, and feeling that the date of the Convention should be definitely fixed before we entered upon another session of Parliament, I wrote a letter to each of my colleagues, in July last, informing them that I was anxious to have matters of importance to the Party considered at special meetings of the members of the Cabinet to be held early in September. When the September meetings were held, I again informed my colleagues of my intention not to lead the Party in another general election, and said that I thought a National Convention should be arranged for forthwith. It was then decided to ask the Advisory Council of the Federation, at its next meeting, to assume this undertaking.