

have actuated the ministry in advising his excellency that no time should be lost in having an appeal to the country.

The paragraph to which I have particular reference is the following:

My ministers are of the opinion that the effective prosecution of the war makes it imperative that those who are charged with the grave responsibility of carrying on the government of Canada should, in this critical period, be fortified by a direct and unquestioned mandate from the people. My advisers, accordingly, having regard to existing conditions and the stage of the life of the present parliament, have decided upon an immediate appeal to the country.

The house will recall that at the special session my hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. Manion) asked me if I was prepared to give an undertaking that an election would not be called by the present government before parliament had again been summoned. I gave him that assurance and I should like to read to the house the words used in that connection. They will be found at page 157 of *Hansard*. They are as follows:

As to the question of a general election before another session, my hon. friend has been kind enough to say that I told him some time ago that I would not think of anything of the kind or countenance it. Nor have I had a suggestion from any member of parliament that a general election should be thought of between now and another session.

I wish to direct particular attention to these words: "before another session" and "a general election should be thought of between now"—that is the time at which I was speaking last September—"and another session."

I then gave to the house my own views with respect to the undesirability of parliament extending its own term. Perhaps I had better give that paragraph, as it follows in natural sequence. I said:

The term of parliament is five years; and as time runs on there may be in the minds of some a temptation to follow the course which was adopted during the last war and have parliament perpetuate its term, provided the war is not over at that time. Personally, I never liked the extension which was made during the time of the last war. In my opinion, the people of the country have the right to say whom they wish to have administering the affairs of Canada, and they should exercise that right periodically at the time provided for in the constitution. I do not think any parliament should take it upon itself to deprive the people of that right. That is my feeling, very strongly, at the moment. There may be conditions between now and the end of this parliament which may necessitate a reconsideration of this question, but I should hope that everyone would expect that the people of Canada should have a chance to express their minds freely with regard to the administration,

the opposition, third parties and generally with their representation in parliament within the period of time which the constitution provides.

I returned to the question of calling the next session of parliament, and said:

It is my intention to have parliament called again in January. It may possibly be necessary to have parliament called before that, but I should expect that we would follow the usual procedure and bring hon. members together some time in the month of January. At that time, we will be in a position to consider what steps may be most necessary with regard to developments that may ensue meanwhile. I hope I have made perfectly clear the position of my colleagues and myself.

Then my hon. friend the leader of the opposition was kind enough to say:

May I be allowed, Mr. Speaker, to break the rules and speak again merely to express my thanks to the Prime Minister for his straightforward answer to my question.

I think it is quite clear from what I have read what was in my mind at the time as to the different circumstances that might arise in a period of war; and that my intention was that before there should be a dissolution of this parliament, parliament itself should be summoned and given that information; in other words, that there would be no election between the last special session and the calling of the present session.

May I say, Mr. Speaker, that at that time I had hoped that circumstances might be such as would permit of another session of this parliament being held before a general election. But as I have said, no one can foresee what is likely to take place in a time of war, and none can foretell the degree to which a government may continue to enjoy the confidence of the people in carrying on the affairs of the nation at so critical a time. I was careful therefore to say that it would be desirable when parliament next assembled to have had a careful review in the interval of all circumstances which would bear on the question of whether it would be advisable to proceed in a period of war with a pre-election session, or to have on the hustings such discussion as must necessarily take place—in other words, to avoid two political battles, one in parliament and one on the hustings as well.

I had felt, I must say, up until a very short time ago that it was going to be possible, at a session called in the month of January, to present to this parliament the measures which the government felt it would be necessary, before an appeal to the people, to carry through for the effective prosecution of the war. I had always been very much concerned, as I think the house is well aware, about the long period of time required by our elections act for a general election. Under the act and its administration I think something like eight weeks