

Liberals who are attempting to hold control of the governmental machinery constitute something like forty-one per cent of this House. There may be one or two individuals who may alter that slightly one way or the other, but approximately they are attempting to hold the government with a minority of only forty-one per cent of the whole House. The Conservatives, it is quite true, as the leader of the opposition (Mr. Meighen) has pointed out, have a larger number in this House and were elected by a larger number. But on the other hand they represent only some forty-seven per cent of this House and, further, according to the leader of the opposition they were elected distinctly on one issue, that of high tariff. Probably the leader of the opposition will not dispute that. I would ask him, even though the Conservative vote was something like 1,467,000 odd, whether out of the total vote of over three millions he could hope that even 1,467,000 would entitle him to power on the issue that he claims was the primary issue before the country.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I am quite ready to state, as I have frequently stated, that hon. members supporting this party in this House were elected mainly on the tariff issue and on the tariff platform moved in this House by myself on June last. The hon. gentleman may describe the situation in his own way. I have never so described it.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I presume that some of the reports of the election were not absolutely incorrect. For instance, I notice, according to the Vancouver Province, the leader of the opposition is reported "as having said:

What will we do when we take office? I will tell you. We will first address ourselves to framing a tariff policy. We will put our tariff wall right up to the level of the American tariff wall.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I used no such language and have frequently corrected that very statement.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I could quote some other reports. I will ask whether this is correct. This is according to a Canadian Press despatch in the Toronto Globe:

It is the proposal of the Conservative party that we pin our faith to a self-reliant and unmistakable protective policy on behalf of the whole country. . . . Put into effect a "Canada first" policy in every sphere of our agricultural and commercial life. An immediate revision on a definitely and consistently protective basis is fundamental.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: That seems to meet with approval. My point is this—and I am quite honest in trying to get at the position of the leader of the opposition—that if he is [Mr. Woodsworth.]

elected at all in harmony with his reported position, how could he possibly hope to carry forward that policy in a House composed as this is? How can he claim to have a majority either in the House or in the country on that position?

Mr. MEIGHEN: For the reason that just about two-thirds of the House were elected on the same professions.

Mr. STEVENS: The island of Montreal, for instance.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I shall have to leave that to the respective contestants to fight out at a later stage. I take it that the situation is this: It is claimed that Mr. Mackenzie King and his government are discredited by the vote. I am inclined to agree. On the other hand, I submit that the leader of the opposition has no mandate on a policy which, it would seem, he has declared to be the issue. This is the situation. Forty-one per cent on this side of the House, with possibly the support of some ten per cent on the other side, are asking to have the privilege of governing this country. On the other hand, some forty-seven per cent, with, I should judge, no assistance from any other part of the House, are asking permission to carry forward the government of the country. Then there is the other aspect that some two or three per cent of the House, who happen to be 9 p.m. in an independent position, are so placed as to be able almost to say which of these two sides is to carry it on. I would ask whether that is a very satisfactory position from the standpoint of democracy as a whole. If we are equal here, as the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe) has suggested, why should either forty-seven per cent or forty-one per cent, in either case a minority of this House, attempt to carry on the government of the country?

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: An independent point of view always brings strange repercussions. The amendment of the leader of the opposition concludes:

Their attempted continuance in office is a violation of the principles and practice of British constitutional government.

To a layman that is not by any means clear. As I understand the matter, the state itself does not recognize groups. It recognizes majorities, and there, it seems to me, is the weakness of the case as presented by the leader of the opposition. I am rather surprised that he lays such emphasis on groups, because he is inclined to emphasize majori-