

*Lack of Confidence Vote*

the interests of the government in any country that every precaution should be taken to see that a ministry in bringing down legislation does so only after the most careful deliberate and mature thought, and that in presenting their legislation to parliament they present only legislation which they believe to be necessary in the country's interests. Permit the ministry to use its own judgment in the matter of whether or not it shall resign upon its legislation being defeated, and it will soon begin to introduce all kinds of legislation without very much thought. You open the door to the introduction of measure after measure that is half-baked, once the ministry know that if defeated on particular measures it may, by skirmishing about and by conferences here and there with different members of the House, get itself re-established in a position where it can continue to carry on. That would be much against the interests of good legislation; it would tend to make a ministry not more careful, but possibly indifferent, with respect to some of the measures it might bring before the House.

There are, after all, times and places for every thing. There are times when confidence in an administration should be expressed, and when any contrary attitude should have serious consequences. One of those times is on the consideration of government measures. Our parliamentary practice, which, as I have already mentioned, is the result of wide experience extending over many years, has fixed certain times and certain places for the expression of confidence, or the reverse, in a ministry. My hon. friend mentioned three instances, I think, which he regarded as supporting his resolution. The first was the attitude of the government of Sir Robert Borden in the matter of titles, he said in this connection that he thought in some way the members of parliament had been precluded from freely expressing their views on that subject. But I ask my hon. friend, what was the view that the parliament of Sir Robert Borden's day took on this very matter of titles? It was the parliament of that day that adopted a resolution abolishing titles altogether. The members of parliament were not prevented from expressing their views on the subject of titles. They had ample opportunity to do so, but there was a time and place for a resolution of the kind. When it was brought in at the appropriate time and at the right place, the resolution carried, notwithstanding the fact that the government had at another time felt that the adoption of such a course with reference to a government measure would have placed it in a false position in view of a stand it had previously taken or

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

pledges or promises it may have made. The government has a knowledge of its obligations which others cannot begin to have. I do not know what the motives of the government of Sir Robert Borden were in making an issue of the question as they did, but I do know this: the fact that they did take that stand in regard to titles helped to defeat the Tory party at the last election; it was one of the things which helped to show the existence of that very condition of autocracy to which my hon. friend has referred. It helped to reveal something more—the servility of the following that the Prime Minister of that day had; and these two things coupled with a like set of circumstances on the part of the administration that succeeded it, account in part for the defeat at the polls of the late administration.

There was in virtue of the government's attitude towards a government measure no denial of the right of any individual member to give expression to his views, nor as the facts prove was the power taken from parliament to do the very thing my hon. friend says they ought to have done in such a case, namely, abolish titles altogether.

Take the other instances to which my hon. friend has referred, the amendments to the Address. One has but to reflect for a moment to see that in view of the limited duration of parliament it is desirable that matters of great public concern should be dealt with at appropriate times and seasons; that if amendments of all kinds are to be considered in order on all occasions, the time of the members, the time of the country, may be used to very little effect in the interests of the people as a whole. I cannot but believe that that is one of the reasons why under the British practice it has generally been maintained that an amendment to the Address must be considered in the nature of a motion of want of confidence in the administration. The Address is presented at the very opening of parliament. It is in reply to the Speech from the Throne. It is considered before hon. members have had opportunity to obtain all the information they should have before they express what may or may not be in the nature of want of confidence in the administration. Take the two amendments to which my hon. friend has just referred. One of them related to the question of economy. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that had the hon. member who moved that amendment waited until the government had presented to parliament the estimates for the present year, he and other hon. members of this House would have been in a better position to express themselves on the question as