

what was our just right, but we as a government come to this parliament and ask the members of all parties to determine at the proper occasion, when it arises, whether this government has the confidence of this House. For the moment the determination of the issue raised by this amendment is simply and solely whether or not we followed the proper constitutional practice. That is the only issue, no matter what the result of the vote may be.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if we have the right and it was in accordance with proper constitutional precedent to say that we proposed to meet parliament and submit our programme to them, then I want to say further that our position in regard to the absence of the Prime Minister from the House is also fully justified by precedent. Before I leave that phase of the subject, however, let me remind hon. gentlemen who talk so glibly about there being no precedent, that at so late a day—and I am re-quoting what my hon. friend the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe) quoted, I am putting it before the House again so it may be clearly understood—

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. MACDONALD (Antigonish-Guysborough): Repetition won't hurt. My hon. friend is not worrying.

Mr. MEIGHEN: He is only smiling.

Mr. MACDONALD (Antigonish-Guysborough): When Lord Salisbury appealed to the country in 1885 there were returned 249 Conservatives, 335 Liberals and 86 Irish Nationalists. The issue at that election was Home Rule. It will be observed that the combined vote of the Nationalists and Liberals outnumbered the Conservatives by almost 200.

Mr. WHITE (Mount Royal): But there was a premier in the House.

Mr. MACDONALD (Antigonish-Guysborough): I will deal with that point; my hon. friend is not answering my proposition by talking about the premier. I will give him the evidence and I am dealing now with this situation, that as a government we had a proper right to come to parliament as we have come, and I say that is what Lord Salisbury did, although he was in a minority of about 200. In 1892—and that is not so very long ago—after the election Lord Salisbury had 268 Conservatives, and 47 Liberal-Unionists, and found himself opposed by 273 Liberals and 81 Irish-Nationalists. He met the House and was defeated. But my hon. friend says there was a premier in the House.

Let us deal with that question now. My hon. friend says in his resolution upon that point, and this is the pith of it—

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

Because the Prime Minister for the time being has no seat. That is the reason he gives for that conclusion, and he dilates upon the fact that the Prime Minister is the selection of the crown and the means of communication between the crown and the ministry and the Commons. Well, let us see where that situation leads us. All constitutional authorities lay it down that the Prime Minister is in the same position as any other minister so far as responsibility to the Commons is concerned. True, he is appointed by the crown, or rather his appointment is ratified by the crown after the selection is made by the party in the House which supports him, but constitutionally his relation to parliament and the House of Commons is just the same as that of any other minister, and no different. I will give to my hon. friends definite authority here, which states specifically that there is no statutory authority of any kind that a minister should have a seat in parliament when he is appointed a minister, but he should take the earliest opportunity of finding a seat.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. MACDONALD (Antigonish-Guysborough): My hon. friends concede that there is no necessity for the Prime Minister to be in either House, but that he should take the earliest opportunity of finding a seat.

Some hon. MEMBERS: No, no.

Mr. MACDONALD (Antigonish-Guysborough): I do not know what my hon. friends meant when they said, "hear, hear."

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: There is a difference between minister and prime minister.

Mr. MACDONALD (Antigonish-Guysborough): There is no difference whatever, with all deference to my hon. friend. If he comes to speak upon this question I would like him to produce any authority that that is so. I cannot find any authority in any constitutional books upon the subject. The Prime Minister is in just the same position as any other minister. A man may be selected as a minister or he may be defeated as a minister, but if he proposes to continue in that capacity, he is bound to find a seat within a reasonable time.