

For Memoirs

Page 2 of memo. re BYNG INCIDENT

C200125

govt. had not been defeated the night before. There had been, in all, as I recall, 4 votes - 3 of them came from private members on either the opposition or govt. side, which I and some members of the govt. did not support. These were private members' motions. There was one other motion which was moved by myself. It was a Govt. motion. It was a motion to adjourn and was carried unanimously. I was therefore still P.M. with the support of the House of Commons behind me. I pointed out that if I could not govern, Meighen certainly could not as the Progressives were not prepared to support him, and as I had been promised their support on the motion for a Commission which would sit during the vacation. It had been my intention to make that statement on Monday and would have done so - would yet be prepared to do so did I not feel that with the Conference coming in England and the situation what it was, it was better to let the country have a free say and return whatever govt. they liked before the time for the conference came. I pointed out I was not asking to be continued in office nor to keep Mr. Meighen out of office but was taking the constitutional procedure of appealing to the people to say whom they wanted in office where the situation as to carrying on the govt. had become so difficult as to be really against the public interest.

Lord Byng then took the view that he was here as an umpire. He had given me a chance to govern. He should now be free to give Meighen a chance. ^{That} I had said to him after the last elections: let Parliament decide. I told him I had said that to him, and Parlt. had decided right along but they decided the matter on the address and on every govt. measure that had come up since, and that they had never decided against the govt. at any time. It was for the H. of C., not for him, Lord Byng, to say whether the govt. had the support of the majority or not. (These are notes that I am dictating from memory as a result of looking at the two editorials: one which appeared in the Ottawa Journal of April 26, 1950, and the other, in the Citizen of April 27, 1950.)

The most objectionable part of Lord Byng's behaviour was perhaps refusing to send for me and allow me to reform the govt. and give me the dissolution which I had asked for. Instead, though I had defeated Meighen in Parliament, Lord Byng was prepared to give to Meighen, who had been defeated in Parliament, a dissolution when he did not command a majority in Parlt. - a dissolution which he had refused to give to me when I still retained a majority in Parliament.