

*Lack of Confidence Vote*

the principle of responsible government has been inverted. To-day the individual members of the government party are responsible to the Cabinet instead of the Cabinet being responsible to the individual members of the party. What chance has the courageous individual, who can still think clearly even under threats of a general election between the merits of a government measure and the defeat of the government, and who is prepared to stand up for the principle in which he believes—what political future in a party has such an individual? He is really held responsible to this Cabinet for his action on the vote, instead of the Cabinet being held responsible to him for their action when he votes. That, I maintain, is an inversion of the principle of responsible government.

I want to turn briefly to a few instances in the history of the Canadian parliament in which this practice has been seen in action; and I am going to take the most recent instances so as to be within the memory of hon. members of this House. I shall first refer to a resolution which was introduced when Sir Robert Borden was in power, embodying a proposal to discontinue the granting of titles in Canada. According to page 2364 of Hansard of May 21, 1918, Sir. Robert Borden said, referring to the proposal contained in the resolution:

I can only say, so far as I am concerned, that if the House does not propose to accept the course which I have asked them frankly and with much respect to take, I should consider that I am relieved from my duty of carrying on any longer the government of this country, and I should ask His Excellency the Governor General to seek other advisers.

I knew personally a number of members of the government party of that day, and am convinced that they were just as anxious for the abolition of titles in Canada as the hon. member who moved the resolution was, yet I find that they voted with the government against the resolution in which they believed. There we have a concrete example of this practice. One might, of course, comment upon the attitude of the government in associating the trivial matter of a motion regarding titles with the defeat of the administration; but that is not a point to be considered here. The fact is that by confusing the issue of the abolition of titles in Canada with the life of the government, those who supported the abolition of titles voted against their principle in order to protect the administration. That was the situation then, and it is often found to be the situation even to-day. Hon. members who, forced under such conditions to vote against their principles to save the government have

[Mr. Irvine.]

to meet their irate constituents and explain the phenomenal change of mind which they so suddenly experienced. Which one of us has not had the—I was going to say opportunity, but that is not the word—experience of hearing a politician trying vainly to explain why he was driven from his acknowledged principles and forced to do something entirely different.

The next instance to which I wish to refer is that which had to do with the amendments moved to the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne at the present session. You will remember that when the amendments were moved, the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) declared that no self-respecting government could possibly accept them. The hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Shaw) moved an amendment to the amendment, in which, I may point out, he was expressing the opinions of the Minister of Finance as set forth last session. Speaking on the budget last year, the Minister of Finance said this:

I must to-day present two thoughts which are of paramount importance. The first is as to the need, the deep and earnest need, of economy. That means that we must appeal both to members of Parliament and to the people to pass what I may call self-denying ordinances. They must not expect all the things which in the good old days they got so readily.

The amendment to the amendment as submitted by the hon. member for Calgary West was as follows:

That this House views with alarm the substantial increase in the national debt, and urges Your Excellency's advisers to exert every possible effort to economize in the expenditure and administration of government, and to lessen the burden of federal taxation which bears so heavily on the people of Canada.

With regard to the amendment, I wish to read a resolution moved by the present Hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) and seconded by the present Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) in 1920:

That in view of the continued increase in the high cost of living, of the greatly increased burden of taxation, of the hardship which many of the people suffer from these causes, and the unrest naturally arising therefrom; and in view of the desirability of adopting measures to increase production and effect such relief to consumers and producers as may be within the power of Parliament, the House is of opinion that, pending a wider revision of the tariff, substantial reductions of the burdens of customs taxation should be made with a view to the accomplishing of two purposes of the highest importance; first, diminishing the very high cost of living which presses so severely on the masses of the people; second, reducing the cost of the instruments of production in the industries based on the natural resources of the Dominion, the vigorous development of which is essential to the progress and prosperity of our country.

The following is the amendment of this session to the Address in reply to the Speech from