

Right Hon. Sir THOMAS WHITE (Ex-Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, when I retired from the Government in August last it was my intention for the reasons given in my letter of resignation, to resign my seat in this House. I refrained from doing so at the request of the right hon. the Prime Minister (Sir Robert Borden), and also of many prominent citizens of my constituency of both political parties. I am glad that I followed that course, because the retention of my seat affords me the opportunity of making answer to questions which may arise touching the fiscal policy of the Government and the administration of the public finances during my period of office.

To those who have referred in terms of commendation to the part I took in the Administration I am deeply grateful. Some criticisms which have been passed in the course of this debate I shall deal with, I hope effectually, before I take my seat. While I am upon my feet I should like to speak, and I hope at not too great length, to the amendment which has been proposed by the hon. leader of the Opposition (Mr. Mackenzie King).

May I be permitted a personal digression? I was not in the House at the close of the last session, and consequently did not have the opportunity, which I now most earnestly embrace, of extending my congratulations to my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition (Hon. Mackenzie King) upon his appointment to the eminent position of head of the Liberal party and its leader in this House. I do so with the greater pleasure because he and I have been old personal friends. Our friendship is of such long standing that I do not like to refer to it for fear it should appear that he and I are growing old. He is a graduate of the same university as I, and I think of the same year. His father was my preceptor in law, a man for whom in his lifetime I always cherished the highest esteem and regard, and whom I bear now in most affectionate remembrance. While our political differences arising from the views which we hold, and doubtless will continue to hold on public questions are not likely to be few or narrow, I assure the hon. leader of the Opposition of a goodly measure of my goodwill and interest in his future career.

Being solicitous as I am for his making a reasonable success in public life, I do not like to see him make initial mistakes. As age is reckoned in politics, my hon. friend is young—not too young. I consider it an advantage in a public man, in no matter what position, or how high that position

[Sir Henry Drayton.]

may be, to be comparatively young because young men profit by their mistakes and old men never do. My hon. friend will recall the criticism which was passed upon the right hon. Mr. Gladstone, I think by Lord Salisbury. Lord Salisbury said that Mr. Gladstone was an old man in a hurry. There is some excuse for an old man being in a hurry because he is near the end of his years politically and physically, but there is not the same excuse for a young man being in a hurry, and that brings me to the amendment which has been moved by the leader of the Opposition, and which seems to me upon the face of it to indicate that my hon. friend is in a hurry. He says he wants an election. He says to the Government, in so many words: You are incompetent; you are disorganized; your mandate has expired; your Prime Minister is sick and absent from his duties; this is not a representative Parliament; I challenge the Government to an election.

That is a bold defy on the face of it. My hon. friend says he is in earnest about it. But when he uses the word "earnest" I think he must use it in the Pickwickian sense. If I believed that my hon. friend was in earnest in moving this amendment, and that he really desired an election, I should be filled with admiration for his temerity because as I estimate public opinion in this country there is nothing in an election for the hon. gentleman or his followers. But the hon. gentleman says he wants an election.

An hon. MEMBER: Hear, hear.

Sir THOMAS WHITE: An hon. gentleman says "hear, hear,"—well, there is a great difference between asking for an election which you know the Government is going to deny you and asking for an election which you are sure to get. There is as much difference as there is between a make-believe lion and a real lion. There is a great deal more danger and risk, Mr. Speaker, in confronting a real lion than there is facing a make-believe lion. And, as a result of this amendment, my hon. friend and his followers in this House get all the exhilaration of courage without any of its attendant risks.

Now that my hon. friend has put forward the amendment, and it has become the subject of debate, I purpose briefly to examine the case for an election at this time. Is there any duty or obligation resting upon the Government to ask for a dissolution of Parliament? What is the position? A little over two years ago there was an election