

as a government while depending upon the support of some 24 Progressives. If a vote is taken in this House, as it will be shortly, assuming that all Liberals in the Liberal group, some 100 in number, record their vote; that both Labour members support the government and that each of the two independent groups do likewise, then in order to have an even division it would require, at the very least, that 18 Progressive members vote with the government. That is the present situation. In other words, the turning of seven Progressive members and the casting of their votes with those of the group to your left, Mr. Speaker, will defeat the government. Do we realize what an important position we hold in this House when seven Progressive members can decide the governmental fate of the country? It causes us who comprise this small group to think very seriously of the position we occupy.

On Friday last a motion was proposed by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe), seconded by the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Macdonald, Antigonish-Guysborough), as follows:

That the speech of His Excellency the Governor General to both houses of parliament be taken into consideration on Monday next, and that this order have precedence over all other business of the House except government notices of motion and introduction of bills, until disposed of.

To that motion we had an amendment moved by the leader of the opposition (Mr. Meighen) which I need not read, seeing that it is already on record. However, looking at the substance of it we note that the second paragraph makes the statement that a large number of Liberal candidates were defeated in the last general election. I am prepared to agree with that statement. The next paragraph states that nine ministers of the crown, including the Prime Minister, were defeated. I believe that this statement also is correct. In the next paragraph it is stated that the Conservative party received the largest popular vote, and I believe that in speaking to the amendment the leader of the opposition mentioned some 200,000 of a plurality as having been given in favour of that party. That statement also, I have reason to believe, is correct. The last paragraph takes up the constitutional objections to the position of the Liberal forces on the treasury benches. Well, I am not prepared to enter into that field of discussion when I see such individuals as the Minister of Justice taking one view very decidedly and the leader of the opposition taking the contrary view. In the circumstances I hardly think it consistent on the part of anyone in this small group to venture

into the field of speculation and to suggest a solution. I prefer to look at the amendment in perhaps a different light. In essence, the amendment, if it is carried, means that we vote no confidence in the Liberal government; that is the point of view we must take with regard to it. It means that we shall either have another election or put a Conservative government in power. We may talk around it and we may use varying phraseology, but in substance that is what it amounts to. If the amendment as proposed carries, this House decides that it has no confidence in the Liberal government and we are faced, as I say, with one of two alternatives—another general election or government by the Conservative party in this House.

If on the other hand the amendment is defeated what will be the situation? What does its rejection signify? It means that by our vote we declare that we have confidence in a defeated government; we say virtually that we have confidence in a group that has been defeated in the country. I do not think I need enlarge that statement. The fact that 101 members have come back to represent a party which originally comprised 117, and the fact that nine ministers of the crown went down to defeat, coupled with the further fact that the Conservative group received 200,000 more votes than the Liberal group, is evidence sufficient to show that the Liberal government was defeated in the last general election. So that the defeat of this amendment just means that we in this House are, so to speak, flouting the will of the people as expressed at the polls and voting confidence in a defeated government.

As a member of this Progressive group I have been compelled to consider very seriously what my vote would mean if given one way or the other. If given against the amendment it means that I, a Progressive, am attempting by my vote to bolster up a shattered party in this country. That would imply that we defy public opinion as expressed in a majority vote. Is it any wonder that some of us in this corner of the House have considered this matter very gravely? We have put in hours, nay, days of thought on the question. The fate of our future government depends upon the decision of the Progressive group, perhaps upon the decision of a few members of this group. I look at the situation not so much in the light of the possibility of either one group or the other enjoying the "sweets of office" or "the fruits of office" or party election advantages, much as these things may be cherished on either side. I do not choose to look at this phase of it. These considerations may appeal to some hon. members who