

under which the Nova Scotia legislature adopted, as it is alleged, a similar resolution. Academic resolutions get us nowhere when we are discussing serious questions. The arguments advanced in these legislatures may have been weak or irrelevant, and it is hardly to the point to cite the action of these legislatures in support of arguments on behalf of the motion now before the House.

I quite agree with the position taken by the right hon. leader of the Opposition (Mr. Meighen) regarding the argument advanced this afternoon that legislators are not in the position of hired servants; it is time we abandoned that theory. I think it is regrettable that hon. gentlemen opposite in the Progressive party, who, I admit, contribute a great deal to the public life of this country and to progressive legislation and progressive ideas, display a disposition to be guided too much by the dicta and the resolutions of commercial or occupational organizations in their several constituencies. It will be unfortunate for this country or for parliament if members of parliament feel that they are bound by the academic resolutions passed by bodies within their constituencies upon the various questions coming before us from time to time for consideration.

Reference has also been made to the two amendments which were moved upon the consideration of the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I did not speak upon that occasion, but I do not hesitate now to say that the first amendment was clearly a vote of want of confidence in the government. I hardly know what to say about the sub-amendment of the member for Calgary West (Mr. Shaw). I do not impute to him any improper motives; it was his absolute right to make the motion. But after all, it was no more than a pious wink, or a yawn, or a purposeless gesture. I do not see how he could have expected the House to support it. Still, in the abstract one would not have liked to condemn it; the hon. member was merely asserting something that everyone believed in. I think the point was taken that the Speech from the Throne did make reference to the question of economy in public expenditure.

Some hon. gentlemen this afternoon attempted to give expression to the view that because in this parliament we have several groups, parliamentary practice will have to be changed. If the group system persists, and if in any parliament the government party constituted a minority of the House, that is, were not equal in numbers to the opposing groups—and we were desirous of having settled, well-ordered, continuous government,

some changes in our constitution might be necessary. I have often thought there is a good deal to be said in favour of a fixed period of parliament, such as obtains in the United States and in France. If the electors should in the future decide that the two historic parties have to be abandoned and that we are to have in parliament four or five or six groups, it is quite conceivable that the constitution would have to be amended in order to ensure some degree of permanence in the government charged with the responsibility of administering the affairs of the country. However, I do not think it is necessary to consider that just at the present moment.

There is not much reason, Mr. Speaker, for a lengthy debate upon this resolution, still less for a vote upon it, because it is merely declaratory of that which is now parliamentary practice here and in Great Britain. I understood the right hon. leader of the Opposition to take that position, and I think he was right. If that is so, then a discussion of the issue is purposeless.

I have already stated that in my judgment it would be a mistake to attempt to lay down any rigid formula for the guidance of parliament so far as its practice is concerned. We would find that unsatisfactory. From day to day things would be occurring that could not be squared with this formula; so I think it is wiser to deal with questions of parliamentary practice in their concrete form as they arise. Now, the resolution says:

That in the opinion of this House, a defeat of a government measure should not be considered as a sufficient reason for the resignation of the government.

Nobody can challenge that statement; the member for Calgary West cited ample authority this afternoon in support of it. I have never heard anything to the contrary asserted in this parliament; it has always been the practice here. Perhaps in this country we have construed it a little too narrowly, and frequently governments have not extended to their supporters quite the measure of freedom that they might well have done. I think that in England they are a little broader in their interpretation of this parliamentary practice. However, the portion of the resolution that I have read is now the accepted parliamentary practice in this country, and there is nothing to be gained by re-asserting or implementing it or supporting it further by a vote of parliament. If the government were defeated to-night, it would not necessarily follow that they would resign. Parliament would hardly expect that to follow; the country would not expect it. The