

this House, as the present administration did last year in connection with the oleomargarine question, and asking for instructions, and then carrying out those instructions, would not, I think, indicate lack of self-respect. For my part, I would esteem a man or a group of men much more highly who adopted that attitude rather than the other attitude of: "Well, if you don't like it we'll quit".

Attention has been drawn already, Mr. Speaker, to the serious danger of confused or blended issues. I wish to point out again, and to emphasize as much as I can, the tremendous danger which resides in that fact. In all our general elections we have, most unfortunately for this country, a great variety of issues confused or blended. In some places one issue is uppermost, in some places another; and the result is that very rarely are questions considered on their merits. Now, I maintain that anything we can do to disentangle issues, to consider and decide every issue on its own merits, is a step towards better legislation and a truer democracy. But when the fate of an administration is linked up with the acceptance or rejection of a particular policy, I think it is highly unfortunate. It has been maintained, of course, that no harm has resulted by following what has been the general practice in this country; but I submit that a great deal of harm has been done. In fact, I am inclined to think that if we could read the hearts of hon. members opposite we would realize that a great deal of harm was done not long ago by their acceptance of an obligation which no doubt compelled many of them to choose what they took to be the lesser of two evils, and to maintain the government in office at all costs, even at the sacrifice of their own principles.

While I would disagree with very little of what the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) said by way of general comment on constitutional practice, at the same time I do not think that his remarks were entirely relevant, nor did they constitute any really valid argument against the adoption of this principle. If all parties in this House could only see their way clear to adopt it, I am convinced that we would all feel a great burden taken off our shoulders. Last year I recall that on the budget vote some hon. members were extremely embarrassed by a conflict between their own opinions and what they thought was their duty in regard to the specific situation that faced them. Surely we can get away from that. Surely we are not so tied to custom but what if it is binding and galling we cannot change the custom to

give us freedom and relief. And if we made the proposed change, and it did not work well, we should still be at liberty to restore the present practice. Therefore, taking all things into consideration, I feel that this is a very, very necessary step towards the liberation of all hon. members, and I shall heartily support the resolution.

Mr. T. W. BIRD (Nelson): Mr. Speaker, I should not have taken part in this debate, but during its course it has occurred to me that there is presented an aspect of very great importance to a third party in this House. I was somewhat amazed to hear the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) express his attachment for things that are antique. I do not know that it becomes him as a Liberal prime minister to have that sentimental attachment to practices and customs by virtue of their ancient character. It seems to me that he presented no argument that can be considered valid by such a House as this that has come to be what it is through the gradual elimination of things antique and their replacement by others that are modern and more in keeping with our present day thought and action.

With respect to his deprecation of adopting any innovation at the present time in view of world conditions and the very uncertain state of our civilization, well, I modestly put it up to him, assuming that he had reference to Russia: Is the condition of things in Russia due to innovation, or is it due to the resistance of innovation? Does he not think that reasonable concession to progress would have had a very marked influence upon the progress of events in Russia? Every right thinking man believes that it would; it was the unreasoning, blind opposition to reasonable improvements that brought Russia to the condition she finds herself in to-day. It is a well known statement of a famous British philosopher that perverse resistance to reasonable innovation is one of the chief incitements to revolution; it always has been and always will be.

Now with respect to the argument regarding responsible government, that is one of the phrases that it is very easy to conjure with, because it has become part of the mosaic of our British parliamentary stock of ideas. "Responsible government,"—what does it mean? Reflect upon it for a minute. Originally—I put it to you—did it not mean the supremacy of parliament? Is that not what it means in the first place? I prefer to look at it in that light. I prefer to do away with that slippery phrase, "responsible government", it