

and he proceeded to defend himself and to declare his fidelity to his party. He contended that he had efficiently governed the country. But the Finance Minister tells us to-day that the First Minister was in error, and that he had drawn a wrong conclusion. Did the Finance Minister do what an honourable man would have done and apologize for the vagueness of the language used by him, and which led the First Minister to draw that wrong conclusion? Let me say further, Mr. Speaker, that the action of the strikers since the strike is not in harmony with the statement made by the Finance Minister to-day. Did they assist in reorganizing the Cabinet by allowing the First Minister that free hand which they professed they were willing he should have in order to fill up the vacancies? Why, Sir, the newspapers of the country are full of statements as to the conduct of the strikers during the period of the strike. Instead of allowing the First Minister to fill up the Cabinet, like ordinary strikers they set out their pickets, and whenever the First Minister made progress they succeeded in intimidating any member who would be willing to take office under him. Let me quote a statement from the Hamilton "Spectator," which I believe is a newspaper enjoying the confidence of the Government; a paper the loyalty of which to the Conservative party no one will question. The Ottawa correspondent on the 13th of January writes as follows to the "Spectator":

The seceding Ministers are working methodically and energetically. You might suppose the headquarters of the party was the place they would avoid, but such is not the case. There is generally one, and sometimes two or three of them at a time among the members. Some of the Bowell men expressed the opinion with considerable energy that the men who smashed the Cabinet should carry on their canvassing outside the rooms of the followers of the Ministry. The canvass is becoming a good deal more earnest and serious as the time draws nearer for meeting on the floor of Parliament.

That is the conduct of gentlemen who now say that they desired to give the First Minister a free hand in filling up the vacancies. The Toronto "Telegram," referring to an informal caucus of the Conservatives from the maritime provinces, said:

Foster made a speech that had the effect of stiffening the backs of the seceders.

The Toronto "World" of the 11th January, says:

If Sir Mackenzie fails in his present task it will be because of the adverse influences at work against him.

And so numerous other papers point out that these gentlemen adopted every possible method to prevent the Prime Minister reorganizing his Cabinet. Let me give you the evidence of the Hamilton "Spectator" of the 7th January, which doubts very much the reasons assigned for the action of the strikers:

There is nothing in the explanations to show why the Ministers should bolt just now after giving Sir Mackenzie Bowell and his policy their support even down to the preparation of the Speech from the Throne. It is manifest that the alleged reasons given in Mr. Foster's statement are no reasons at all, and that the real reason for the bolt remains to be guessed at.

That is the statement of an organ of the Government and not of a Grit newspaper. Now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Postmaster General, who leads the Government in this House, stated that he thought the action of the seceders, or the bolters as they are undignifiedly called, in returning to office, would meet with the approval of the country. Let me show the House, so far as I can in a few moments, how far their action has met with the approval of the country, and the quotations with which I will trouble the House will be wholly from Conservative and Independent Conservative papers. The Hamilton "Herald," which, I believe, is an independent journal, said editorially on the 13th of January:

Politicians will learn from it that treachery of the rankest character is not regarded simply as smart politics.

The same paper, on the 11th of January, in its Ottawa correspondence, says:

Conservatives are in high feather. Down with the seven traitors.

The same journal, on the 9th of January, said:

It is just a question for Conservatives to consider, if the men who have proved traitors to one leader, are not quite as likely to prove traitors to another and to the party itself.

A paper published under the shadow of this building, the Aylmer "Sun," of the 9th of January, says:

Many are calling for Sir Charles Tupper to take the helm, as being the one strong man who can command the more unruly and ambitious men who have helped to bring on the crisis.

In this connection let me read a statement made by the First Minister in which he says that the embarrassments of the Government were, in his opinion, not attributable to his weakness, but to the misconduct of his supporters, who made government under him an impossibility, and who were determined to destroy his usefulness and to break up his Government, with a view to securing the succession of some one else. The First Minister's precise words, spoken in the Senate one week ago, are as follows:—

I say that, had I had that loyal support which every Premier ought to have in his endeavours to govern the country, the support that was given most loyally to my late chief, Sir John Macdonald, and to Sir John Thompson, I would have been just as successful in carrying on the affairs of the Government as my predecessors. \* \* \* Had not that jealousy prevailed and the ambition to destroy the usefulness of the Government been so firmly rooted in the breasts of those