

*Lack of Confidence Vote*

keeping with the spirit of the British constitution, and I submit that no argument has been adduced to-day to disprove it. Neither is there anything Bolsheviki about this resolution. The reason why we have so much unrest to-day to which the Prime Minister referred is because we have parliaments that are afraid to take up so-called innovations; that is the chief difficulty.

The Prime Minister centered his argument chiefly upon his defence of what he calls "responsible government." That was well characterized by one of the Progressives as a "slippery" phrase. It is an extremely slippery phrase, and it slips away from us sometimes before we can get our eyes on it to know just exactly what it looks like. But at any rate the Prime Minister would have it that we are trying to take responsibility away from parliament; whereas the meaning of the resolution is to place responsibility upon parliament. We are opposing the present system which gives all the power to the Cabinet and places responsibility rather with the Cabinet than with parliament, where it belongs. We are asking that parliament have the right to take that responsibility, which again we understand to be the practice and privilege of the British constitutional form of government.

Both the Prime Minister and the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Ladner) either misunderstood the import of the resolution in this regard, or else they both fear granting to parliament that power in reality which they both so eloquently pictured we have in theory. The Prime Minister seemed to be afraid that governments would not resign at all if we had such legislation as this. As a parliament I think we would be quite prepared to see that governments did resign if we found there was anything weak about them. But we are differentiating between a legislator and an administrator. The Prime Minister could not understand how a good administration might pass bad legislation. But a good administrator might be a very, very poor legislator, a man might be able to discharge the duties of an executive office with marked ability, yet notwithstanding this parliament might not be prepared to accept his recommendation on all matters of policy. I think we have to distinguish between these two functions, that of legislation and that of administration, whether we will or not.

The hon. member for Halifax also assured us that we of Labour and the Progressives were paying too much attention to what people are telling us through their organizations. Then he proceeded to show that all the precedents quoted by the hon. member

[Mr. Irvine.]

for Calgary West prove that the kind of government this resolution proposes has always been and always will be according to the British constitution, and is in effect a declaration of our acceptance of the policy and spirit of that constitution. If that is so, Mr. Speaker, I should expect the hon. member for Halifax to vote for this resolution; otherwise he will be voting against what he terms is a statement of the British constitution. I wonder whether he recognizes that that is the position in which he placed himself when he made that declaration.

Then, the hon. Minister of National Defence (Mr. Graham) thought the suggested method would be like the United States system of government; that there was no possibility of striking a happy medium between what they have and what the British constitution contemplates. He believes, he says, in the old British parliamentary system, and he goes on to say that there will be no more freedom for the individual member, no more freedom for parliament, if this resolution is adopted than is accorded under present practice. Then the hon. Minister of the Interior (Mr. Stewart) comes and tells us that the adoption of this resolution would give so much freedom to parliament that the government would be entirely robbed of the authority which they must have under the British constitution. Now, I have no doubt that the hon. Minister of the Interior made that argument when this matter came before the Alberta legislature, he being Premier of the province at the time. But legislation asserting this principle is now on the statute books of that province, and the government has not suggested that it has lost any of its power to do efficient work of administration, nor that there has been any great upheaval as a result; on the contrary, everything seems to be moving along reasonably and satisfactorily.

The right hon. leader of the Opposition (Mr. Meighen) accepted the resolution as at least having some sense in it. He said there were certain practices that he deplored in connection with the present system, but suggested that by introducing such a practice as is proposed by this resolution we should be likely to bring upon ourselves more difficulties than we could get rid of. He went on to say that he opposed the motion chiefly because the principle it involved was a false or a mistaken one. But you will all notice that the right hon. leader of the Opposition came to his great faith in the present system by a contemplation of its march through the centuries. Well, he cannot speak with such confidence until at least some other proposal