

responsible to the people. The actual condition, however, is that the cabinet is responsible to those who appoint it, and as the cabinet brings forward its policies and ensures support of them by a pre-arranged majority, it is not in any real sense responsible to parliament. Of course, parliament is allowed to discuss the policies of the cabinet, but an effective majority has been arranged for. The policies of the cabinet have been already drawn up, they are outlined in the Speech from the Throne, and will be carried through in the manner and to the extent desired by the cabinet, provided that the majority party is strong enough numerically to outvote the rest of parliament.

It is contended, that such a party, namely, the majority or government party, represents the voice of parliament because it is a majority. Again theoretically, this is perfectly true; but practically it is not true. A mechanical, mathematical majority may not represent the voice of parliament. Under the conditions that exist to-day members of the majority party may be compelled to vote contrary to their best thoughts and their declared principles. A system which puts a member of parliament in that position is defective both from the point of view of the mentality and the morality of parliament. This practice of cabinet control by threat of election has a tendency to confuse the issues upon which members are called upon to decide, and it has the effect of placing them in a position which to say the least is at times very uncomfortable and very embarrassing.

But, it may be asked, what magic power has the cabinet over the majority or government party so as to ensure that its measures will be upheld at all times. That magic power is exercised by confusing the issues which may be brought before parliament with the life of the administration, so that the government party is left with the alternative of supporting the issue or saving the administration, and it is only natural if the desire to save the administration should take precedence in the minds of most members of a government party. It is commonly understood to be the practice in Canada that if a government is defeated on a matter of policy, or on a measure considered by the administration to be of importance, that such defeat is tantamount to a vote of no confidence, and that the resignation of the government should follow. Not only is this so, but a government may at any time declare an issue to be a vote of no confidence. That declaration has the effect of a whip—not the party whip, but the real shillalah held over the heads of all the government supporters—the possibility of defeat and the bringing on

of a general election. But it has the effect also usually of defeating the measure, no matter what merit there may be in the measure, because in such a case the salvation of the government is considered first by the majority party and the measure afterwards. So really while the government party may vote against a very good measure in order to save the government, their action is no indication of what they really think about that measure.

If the majority party had been free to vote upon such issues as have been declared by governments to imply no confidence, it is very likely that in most cases those issues would have received majorities. But in every case I believe in the history of the Canadian parliament when the government has treated such a vote as tantamount to a vote of no confidence the issue has been defeated. That there is no instance so far as I am able to find—I am subject to correction of course—in our parliamentary records of a government having been defeated under such circumstances, tends only to prove two things. It proves, in the first place, that the governments of the past have always had a fairly safe majority; and it proves further that the majority party has given the life of the government first consideration.

Now, this practice of confusing an issue with the life of the government is not a mere formality such as we have in the ceremonials incident to the opening of parliament, though the practice is equally as far out of date as is the ceremonial feature—perhaps those ceremonials are not altogether useless as they represent a tableau of an important and glorious period of history. But this is of greater importance in so far as the members of this House are concerned, and in so far also as the country is concerned, because it has a very real and immediate and, I think I might also say, a pernicious influence. It is superfluous to recall the various steps which have been taken to bring parliament to this practice. There is no doubt that at one time this system served the purpose of those who introduced it, and there is little doubt that other methods might have done equally well to secure the aims desired had any one thought of them. To-day it is used chiefly to keep governments in office. It is used also for the purpose of defeating measures which the people's representatives may desire, but which for some reason or other the cabinet does not want.

This practice is not at all an aid to responsible government, as some would have it, indeed, it is rather a hindrance to that desirable end, for we find that by this practice