

Government's Right to Office

is a cruel discrimination against this class of disabled pensioners who suffered in defence of their country. Urge on government rescinding of their order.

A. E. MOORE,

On behalf of Joint Veterans of Winnipeg.

Hon. ERNEST LAPOINTE (Leader of the House): The minister has had some representations along the line suggested by my hon. friend and they are actually under consideration. I shall be pleased to bring this matter to his attention and I will give my hon. friend all the information that he might wish.

AUDIBILITY OF DEBATE

On the Orders of the Day:

Mr. A. L. BEAUBIEN (Provencher): As we are about to go on with one of the most important debates we have ever had in this House, might I be permitted to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to request hon. members who are taking part to speak loudly enough to enable us to get the information necessary to cast an intelligent vote?

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope hon. members will speak louder.

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S SPEECH

MOTION FOR PRECEDENCE
GOVERNMENT'S RIGHT TO RETAIN OFFICE

The House resumed, from Friday, January 8, consideration of the motion of Hon. Ernest Lapointe for consideration of the Speech of His Excellency the Governor General at the opening of the session, and its precedence over other business, and the proposed amendment thereto of the Right Hon. Arthur Meighen.

Mr. A. M. CARMICHAEL (Kindersley): Mr. Speaker, after the friendly admonitions of the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Beaubien), I will try to speak loudly enough so that at least he can hear my voice. We are met together in this parliament under circumstances that are unique in the annals of Canadian history. I doubt if any parliament since confederation has met under similar conditions, and it is doubtful if any future Canadian parliament will be confronted with such a situation. It had not been my desire to enter into this debate so early in the day; in fact I should have preferred to keep silent and to listen to the views of others so that I might obtain necessary information. Indeed, that was my object in adjourning the debate. I had almost come to the conclusion that a division of the House was looked for on Friday evening and I was

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

not then in a position to cast an intelligent vote. I had hoped that a number of speakers on either side of the House would reveal their position so that an intelligent opinion might be formed respecting the matter at issue. The situation, however, is such that I am compelled to address the House.

During almost the whole of our history we have had the two party system in Canada. From the time of confederation until possibly the year 1919 Canada knew nothing other than the two party system of government. In 1919 there was the commencement of a third group in this House. It was small at the beginning, consisting as it did of some dozen or more members, but in 1921 those numbers were greatly augmented so that the group to which I have the honour to belong had a following in this House of some sixty or more members. In the recent election, it is true, the public dealt harshly with us and we have come back here with considerably reduced numbers. Nevertheless our position is one of great importance. I doubt if any other group holds a position of such primary importance as that held by the Progressive group in this House. The largest group sitting immediately to your left, Mr. Speaker, is composed of 116 members; the second largest group, sitting to your right, comprises some 101 members, and our Progressive group numbers twenty-four. We also have a fourth group. It was in the last parliament and it is in this parliament; it is known as the Labour group, and is composed of two members. I believe we have the head, heart and tail of another group, composed of and concentrated in one individual known as an Independent. I am not sure but what we have a second Independent group, and if that be the case, all these go to make some six groups in this House.

During my time in this chamber it has been our custom and practice to go by majority rule. A majority of the House decides a question. Usually it was a majority in the House that carried on the government, but at present we have the second largest group bringing down a legislative programme and functioning as the government. I am not just sure whether or not we are establishing precedents in that respect. I recall the Prime Minister's pre-election statement that with 117 members in this House he was too dependent on the Progressive group of some 60 members to be able to carry on his government properly; and yet we have the strange situation of some 101 members coming back to this House, eager and anxious to function