

very important facts. The one piece of information which he gave us was that there is no difference between the members of the Government on questions of public policy, whether relating to ordinary questions or to matters of constitutional procedure, but that the division of the Cabinet has taken place wholly on the question of the intellectual capacity of the Prime Minister. The hon. gentleman has told us that that is the sole question of difference between those who have withdrawn from the Government and those who continue members of the Administration. After having given the Prime Minister a trial for a period of over twelve months, one-half of his colleagues have confidence in his capacity and fitness for the position he occupies, and the other half are of the contrary opinion. Sir, the time chosen by the hon. gentlemen who have withdrawn from the Government for making this declaration and for impeding the public business is, in my opinion, an extraordinary one. Before the House met, these hon. gentlemen deliberated upon the policy that was to be pursued by the Government this session. They determined what measures of public importance were to be submitted to this House, and advised His Excellency upon that subject; and they put in His Excellency's mouth the Speech from the Throne which has been delivered to Parliament. Now, Sir, after that Speech has been given, and before this House has had any opportunity of making a reply to it, seven of the hon. Prime Minister's colleagues have withdrawn from the Government, and have created a political crisis which, if it could be justified at all, ought to have arisen, looking at the causes assigned, before Parliament met, instead of after the meeting of Parliament. These hon. gentlemen, it may be, have considered their party interests: I am not a judge of that matter; but they have certainly not considered the public interests in bringing us here, after making known to His Excellency what measures the Government considered of public importance, and then impeding the public business and making it impossible to proceed with it in consequence of their party differences, which they have seen fit to discuss publicly on the floor of Parliament instead of confining them to the party caucus. They have charged incapacity against their leader—a leader whom they accepted, a leader who was not forced upon them, a leader whom they were not obliged to accept, because it was open to them at the very outset to inform His Excellency that they had not confidence in his capacity or ability, and did not consider him qualified for the position. But they did not do that. They chose to act under him—to undertake to carry on the affairs of the Government under him; and it is only now, at the opening of Parliament, that they attempt to justify the

course they are taking in impeding the public business by declaring that they have a leader characterized by imbecility and a want of capacity for the duties that devolve upon him. This, Sir, seems to me to be a very extraordinary position for these hon. gentlemen to take, and an unusual defence to offer for the course they have taken. Sir, the declaration made yesterday by the hon. member has rather the appearance—I do not say it is so in fact—of a conspiracy than a protest on the part of those who make it. Let us look at the facts. This House is the place where the business of the country is conducted; it is here that ministerial responsibility mainly rests; and who is responsible for the conduct of business in this House? Why, Sir, the hon. gentleman who read this statement on behalf of himself and his colleagues is responsible as leader of this House, far beyond the Prime Minister, for the conduct of the public business; and if there has been hesitation, if there has been delay, if there has been an exhibition of incapacity, it would rather rest upon the hon. gentlemen who represent the Government in this House than upon the First Minister who sits in the other Chamber. That, Sir, is the way in which this matter strikes me. The hon. gentleman read in this House yesterday a sentence of death against the Prime Minister under whom he served. The hon. gentleman has sat, I believe, for a period of eight years in the Government with the Prime Minister. Now, I have never expressed my confidence in the hon. gentleman who leads the Government. I do not agree with his views of public policy; I do not agree with the course which he and his friends have taken in this House; but, Sir, the hon. gentleman did agree and sat with him for a period of eight years, and knew what his capacity was before he was chosen as Prime Minister, and so did the six hon. gentlemen who have joined with him in this protest. Yet they come here and declare that they cannot get on with the public business because of the incapacity of their leader, although, as I say, that leader is in a less degree responsible for the conduct of public business than the hon. gentlemen who sit in this House. Sir, we have seen hesitation and delay in the conduct of public business. Who does not remember the manner in which the hon. gentleman who has lately led this House dealt with the banking system? Who does not remember the forbearance shown to him by his colleagues and by all the members of this House on that occasion? Who does not remember the promise to lop off the decaying branches in the matter of the fiscal policy of the Government, and the Bill which the hon. gentleman introduced, and the speech which he made in pursuance of that promise? And yet this hon. member, who has shown to what a

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell.)