

*Lack of Confidence Vote*

back a long way into British parliamentary history, for of course the British constitution and parliamentary practice play a large part in all these discussions. The right hon. leader of the Opposition also went back into British parliamentary history. I quite agree with them to a great extent. I am a great admirer of British institutions. But at the same time we are moving forward day by day, and new conditions demand new methods. I took the following extract from Lowell's Government of England, to be found at page 80:

No serious changes in the structure of the cabinet are probable so long as parliamentary government retains the present form; and it is too early to speculate on the changes that may occur if the parliamentary system itself becomes modified under the pressure of political parties acting in a democratic country.

I claim, Mr. Speaker, that that time has arrived, that we are living under new conditions, and that we must carry on our parliamentary institutions under new conditions. The British parliamentary practice has been founded on the two-party system. In this House we now have three parties. I know there have been third and fourth parties in the British House of Commons, but they never exercised any large influence on the government, certainly nothing to the same degree that this party exercises upon the government in this House.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. FORKE: I am a very modest man. I repeat again, new conditions require new methods. Reference has been made to the British parliamentary system. I do not know but what that system has been breaking down for almost half a generation now, and we see at times an almost chaotic condition prevailing in the Mother of Parliaments. I believe that one of the tragedies of our modern system of government is the lessening of the people's faith in parliamentary institutions. Why has this occurred? Simply because cabinets, through custom, have become autocratic, forcing their policies through parliament with the help of an obedient majority, so that parliamentary government has largely become a farce. I believe that a great deal of credit is due to the Prime Minister for some of the methods he adopted last year, and it would not do any harm if he proceeded further along the same path this year. I for one would be quite ready to give assistance and advice in many cases—again I speak with all modesty, Sir,—before the government committed itself irretrievably to any measure upon which there may be a difference of opinion. That, I believe, would be true parliamentary government.

[Mr. Forke.]

I have no fear if this resolution should be given effect to: on the contrary, I believe that government will move along a great deal more smoothly and in the better interests of the country. In conclusion, Sir, let me say that I do not want to hear any more of those taunts that we are afraid to vote against the government for fear there should be a dissolution of parliament.

Hon. A. K. MACLEAN (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, the subject matter contained in the resolution is somewhat circumscribed, and there is very little new that one can say regarding it. However, the discussion has been quite interesting and should do considerable good. But that discussion having taken place, I venture to submit to the House that little benefit could come from forcing a vote upon the resolution.

The hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Shaw) I think stated the constitutional question very well this afternoon; but I do not think he spoke in support of the resolution. Every argument he adduced, every parliamentary precedent that he referred to, was evidently and obviously in support of the position taken by hon. gentlemen who oppose him. Some hon. members opposite have insinuated that to oppose this resolution is to be unprogressive and that such opposition would disclose an illiberal tendency. On the contrary, I assert that the adoption of this resolution would be unprogressive and reactionary in its effect.

The leader of the Progressive party (Mr. Forke) has referred to the fact that parliamentary practice is always developing new phases. This is quite true. That being so, why attempt to circumscribe and make rigid parliamentary practice by the adoption of a set formula and expect it to be applicable to-day, to-morrow, and afterwards? That is not characteristic of parliamentary practice under British institutions, and I believe we will make sounder progress by following the old paths than by attempting to lay down procedure to guide future parliaments.

The actions of the legislatures of Alberta and Nova Scotia have been referred to. I deny the right of Alberta to establish parliamentary precedents which we must follow. I really do not know what action that legislature did take. My attention was called this afternoon by the hon. member for Brome (Mr. McMaster), who sits beside me, to the fact that on the occasion of the first motion, similar to that which we are now considering, being made in the legislature of Alberta it was ruled out of order; possibly it was later adopted, I cannot recall the circumstances