

the usual step—I should have said the only step—which would have created a vacancy in the House. It is true that in 1921 the right hon. leader of the opposition, who had been defeated in his constituency, did appoint a member of parliament to public office before he resigned as Prime Minister, for the purpose of creating a vacancy and securing a seat for himself in this House. My right hon. friend (Mr. Meighen) may believe that he was right in doing that, and that my leader is wrong in doing the other thing. There are many people in this country who will think otherwise; and I may add that the action of the leader of the opposition in that respect was strongly criticized. But before dealing with that point let me put this to him: If it is true, as he said this afternoon, that the government no longer exists when the Prime Minister has been defeated and has a minority of the seats—

Mr. MEIGHEN: I did not say that.

Mr. LAPOINTE:—surely when my right hon. friend appointed a man to public office in 1921 there was no government to make such an appointment.

Mr. MEIGHEN: If my hon. friend will permit me, I did not use the words he attributes to me. I did not say that because a prime minister was defeated the government thereupon went out of existence. I stated that a government could not function in parliament without a prime minister in either House.

Mr. LAPOINTE: I am in the judgment of Hansard—

Mr. MEIGHEN: Hear, hear.

Mr. LAPOINTE:—as to what my right hon. friend said, but I will not discuss it with him.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: I would not either.

Mr. LAPOINTE: It does not matter very much. When my right hon. friend the leader of the opposition took that course in 1921 and appointed a member of parliament to a public office, I think in the Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment, the emolument of which amounted to only a few dollars a year, my right hon. leader issued a statement which I will read to the House. I take it from the Ottawa Journal of December 29, 1921. It is as follows:—

If it be true, as the press reports of this morning indicates, that Mr. Meighen, in order to provide himself with a seat in the House of Commons, has appointed Mr. A. C. Casselman, the member-elect for Grenville, to a position in the Department of Soldiers'

[Mr. Lapointe.]

Civil Re-establishment, thereby creating a vacancy in the House of Commons, and has caused writs to be issued for a by-election in that constituency on January 26, I can only say at the moment that such a violation of constitutional procedure can scarcely fail to bring the severest censure upon Mr. Meighen, a censure which the party he leads must also share if it countenances such an act.

Just whether this high-handed and unwarranted course on Mr. Meighen's part can be defended on technical or legal grounds remains to be seen. That it is morally indefensible I do not hesitate to say. One thing is certain; the Canadian public will not fail to recognize, nor Canadian political history to record, that Mr. Meighen's last act as Prime Minister, like his first, was one of usurpation. When it is recalled that Mr. Meighen owes his personal defeat and the defeat of his administration, in considerable measure, to his previous usurpation of office, his attempt to regain a seat in the House of Commons by a like method of procedure amounts to open defiance of the expressed verdict of the Canadian people.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh oh!

Mr. LAPOINTE: My hon. friends opposite were not so scrupulous at the time, and they are still laughing. The statement continues:

I resent very strongly the statement which appears in the inspired despatch published in the press to the effect that there is reason to believe that what has been done was not without my knowledge. I had no intimation whatever that any act of the kind was contemplated, let alone perpetrated. If I had, I should never have countenanced it for a moment.

Can any one blame the Prime Minister for having declined to resort to such a doubtful expedient to secure a seat for himself in the House, especially after having expressed the view he did with regard to the performances of my right hon. friend in 1921? Let me tell my right hon. friend that the Prime Minister will enter this house pretty soon and will do so by the main entrance, and by no other way. It is also true that ministers have been defeated in Ontario and New Brunswick. But is it a new occurrence? Those ministers have been defeated in provinces which voted almost solidly for the other side. It is a regrettable situation, but would the people have any redress if the government were handed over to the right hon. leader of the opposition, who has practically no followers in two very important provinces, namely Quebec and Saskatchewan. Those are situations which I repeat are unavoidable, especially in a federated country like Canada. But the genius and the spirit of our representative institutions should be equal to the problem and I believe are equal to it. I am glad that this question is being discussed by this House, because it is the very issue upon which parliament was summoned. This government has been charged with having usurped the office of government and with hanging on against the will of the people.