

*Lack of Confidence Vote*

asked for an expression of opinion, which it received, and subsequently it brought down a bill to embody that opinion in legislation.

Mr. LADNER: Did the government carry out that expression of opinion?

Mr. GOOD: I think it did. There was some criticism when the bill was brought down by reason of the fact that it was only for one year; but apart from that I think the government did carry out the opinion expressed by the House on that occasion. At that time a very sharp exchange of compliments took place between the right hon. gentleman who leads the Conservative party and several other members of the House. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall just read a part of that colloquy. The hon. member for Marquette (Mr. Crerar) spoke in part as follows:

I do not quite hold the same view that my right hon. friend the leader of the opposition does in his criticism of the government for failing to accept full responsibility and bring down its measure. I think the position taken by the government in asking the judgment of the House on this question, as it did a few weeks ago, was a fair and a very defensible position. If that were done a little more frequently in parliament—

Mr. Meighen: We would get into this mess more frequently, would we not?

Mr. Crerar: No, I do not think so at all. I think we would have better results. My criticism of the government in this case is that once the judgment of parliament was taken they did not implement that judgment to the full and make this measure permanent.

I shall not read the next few sentences, but a little further on the hon. member for Marquette is reported as follows:

That is all very well, but if the view of my hon. friend is held to the letter, it simply means that a dozen gentlemen composing the government of this country will decide in cabinet council what is good for the country, and then come to parliament and say, you must take this or turn us out.

Mr. Casgrain: Toryism.

Mr. Meighen: That is right.

Now, the situation last year was very interesting to me. I may say that a great many things that have happened here have seemed to me, as a new member, rather absurd. Possibly I could get used to them if I were here long enough; I dare say people can get used to anything. But if we are to interpret history and human life correctly, it seems to me that we must beware of being tied down to conventions. I am not a hare-brained fanatic. I do not want to see startling and very rapid changes in legislation or constitutional practice. But I do think that we are in constant danger of keeping the lid screwed down too tightly on free speech, on matters of constitutional change, and on everything that encourages or promotes

[Mr. Good.]

change. And the effect of that will be upheavals and explosions.

Let me give another illustration which seems to me to fit the case under discussion at the present moment. There comes a time in the development of every fertile egg in the hatching process when the imprisoned chick begins to break the shell and to emerge. If the chick did not break the shell at a certain period in its development it would die; and it is just as natural for the shell to be broken at a certain stage as for any other change to take place in the organic world. Our customs are very often something like the shell that surrounds the chick—we have to break them or we will die. It was said many years ago, as all hon. members know, that the new wine would burst the old wine-skins. I think that in this chamber at the present time there is a good deal of new wine trying to burst the old skins—old customs which tie us down, cripple and embarrass us and, as far as I can see, do us no good whatever.

I take it that there are two ways in which an administration can carry on. One is by having a solid, and what tends to become a servile, majority behind it. In that way a group of men can ram down the throats of their followers and the country any policy they choose. I think we do not have to look very far back in our history to see something of that sort. The other method is for the government to conform its policy, not only before it brings that policy down but afterwards, to the will of the elected representatives, and through them to the will of the people. I see nothing in that attitude which would indicate any lack of self-respect on the part of a government. In fact, it seems to me that it indicates an attitude the very reverse. I know it has been maintained by many that the self-respect of this parliament would be taken away if a constitutional check were placed upon it such as might operate through the optional referendum; but, Sir, I do not believe that that is so. We admit that we are here subject to the surveillance and guidance of the electorate, because every four or five years we go back to the fountain-head of power and ask for further instructions and for a fresh mandate. Now, we do not consider that we demean ourselves because we do that. Nor would we, I take it, be any more lacking in self-respect if we were subject to a continuous oversight by the people, which we might have through such a device as the optional referendum. So that the attitude of a government in coming to