

advice of her lawyers, to insert a clause that the characters in the book are not drawn to life. It is called "The Handwriting on the Wall", and any one can see a very close resemblance to a lot of matters prominent in public affairs in British Columbia in the last few years. It depicts conditions in British Columbia ten years ago, it depicts conditions as they are to-day, and it depicts conditions as they will be ten years hence provided, she says, a government can be found in British Columbia venal and corrupt enough to give the Japanese the vote. That may seem like a scare line, but, Sir, I tell you Japanese voted in the last general election in British Columbia, and we do not know how soon some party seeking for campaign funds will not grant them the franchise. I earnestly commend to the leader of the Government and to the leader of the Opposition and to every other member of this House, especially the western ones, a perusal of this book.

If you will bear with me for a moment I will speak a word on my own position in the House, I trust for the first and last time. In some respects I hold a rather unique position inasmuch as I believe I am the only Independent elected to this House. Other Independents are either Progressive Independents or Liberal Independents, and they have more or less, I think, dropped into their respective parties. I do not blame them for doing so, that is their natural course, but I happened to be elected by an entirely independent convention of those opposed to the late Meighen Government. At that convention were represented Liberals, Socialists, soldiers, farmers, labour men, and, I blush not to say, Conservatives,—they were all represented at that convention and they all supported me. Therefore, while I owe no obedience to any party, yet I am much indebted to the representatives of every party individually for my election, and that puts me in a somewhat different position to that occupied by other hon. members. I think Scott, speaking of the French courtiers of his day, used the lines:

Who walk ambition's diamond ridge,  
Where stoutest hearts have failed;

indicating that the ridge was so fine, so diamond-pointed, that they had to be exceedingly careful lest they fell to one side or the other. And that is the trouble that confronts me: lest I be led astray,—being, as I have said, of a simple and confiding disposition—into supporting one party as a party rather than as a principle.

[Mr. Neill.]

The only way I can get out of that difficulty is to confront it when any question comes up and to ask myself: Is this measure in the interests of the constituency I represent or the province I come from? If the answer is in the affirmative, then I think I can say it will also be for the benefit of Canada and that I can safely vote for it.

From my seat here I occupy a rather strategic position. I have my friends the Conservatives on one side of me and the Progressives on the other; with one ear I can listen to the counsels and obtain the benefit of the wisdom and experience of these Conservative statesmen, and with the other I can draw inspiration from the youth and virility of the Progressive party. But I must confess that I am slightly deaf in one of my ears, and it happens to be the ear next to my Conservative friends. The deafness, however, is only slight, Sir. As for my Liberal friends opposite, I shall judge them not by their speeches and not by their programme but simply and entirely by their actions. The right hon. leader of the Opposition, (Mr. Meighen) in his speech the other day, to which I listened with a great deal of pleasure, because it was to me an intellectual treat—the caustic humour and keen analysis which characterize his remarks interested me quite a little—spent a good deal of his time in trying to prove that hon. members on the other side, especially those in the ministry, were acting or were likely to act in a manner inconsistent with their utterances of some months or years ago. That may or may not be so, but I am prepared at this stage to let the dead past bury its dead and act upon the scriptural maxim: "By their fruits ye shall know them." It is upon what the Liberals do, not upon what they say, that I shall judge them.

Now the convention that nominated me gave me a free hand. I was to be opposed to the Meighen Government, and I knew that that first pledge would be easily fulfilled. After the Meighen Government was disposed of, I was to be given a free hand to support any government or any coalition,—it appearing to us at that time that there might be a coalition. But there is always a string, you know; I did have a string tied to me, in the shape of a platform drawn up by the convention, to which I am committed to give my support. When I came down here and began to compare notes with my fellow-members I found I was not in such a position of political isolation as I