

sibility or censure, or he could have telegraphed, if in doubt under the circumstances, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and ascertained clearly the position in view of our relationship to the imperial parliament. That may have been done, but there is no evidence that it was done. His Excellency could have done that in order, first, to do that which was right, and secondly, to escape responsibility. I wish to pay at this moment a most earnest and sincere tribute to His Excellency the Governor General. He is a man—I have met him personally and I can speak with knowledge—for whom I have the deepest respect. I regard him as one of our great Canadians, as a man who has done as much as most individuals in this country, if not more than most, to instil into the hearts of our Canadian people a true Canadian spirit. I am satisfied that His Excellency is absolutely apart altogether from partisanship in any action he has taken, and in any action he may take, but we must look at facts as they are placed before us and ask ourselves what did he do? He accepted the resignation of my right hon. friend the leader of the late administration, and refused him a dissolution. There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, about this: Until recent years it had been understood that the Governor General of the dominions did possess discretionary rights. The king himself did not possess those rights, excepting only in theory, and has not exercised them for heaven knows how many years.

We are asked now to imagine the position in this country—I am speaking I hope now with some effect upon my hon. friend from South York (Mr. Maclean) because I know his predilections in this matter; I know the sincerity with which he has approached the question of our constitution and our position as a national unit within the commonwealth of national units—I say to him that neither he nor I, holding the views we do, can be true to our trust and our own conscience if we let pass this opportunity of registering definitely our assertion and our belief that the evolutionary movement in our political development has brought about an exact similarity of situation in the Dominions with that that exists in England herself. From the day Sir Robert Borden, greatly to his credit, secured for Canada the position that he did secure for her at the time of the signing of the treaty, we must assume in fairness to him and to national sentiment at that time, and since, that the moment we assumed national status we took along with that national status, and exactly to the same extent, the constitutional position that was then existing in Great Britain as respects the king and parliament.

His Excellency on this occasion did not act as the king would have acted. He did not accept the advice of his ministers. One must ask oneself why he did not do it. There are two reasons only that I may assume at the moment, if one may do that properly: First, having in view the interests of the country, he decided that it was in the national interest that there should not be a general election if one could be avoided, and looking over the situation that faced him in this parliament he asked himself: Have I any assurance that there is any other group in this House that can act as my advisers, and that is capable of continuing to administer the affairs of this country? And so he undoubtedly called upon the right hon. leader of the acting government. When that question arose, did the right hon. leader of the acting government assure His Excellency that he had absolute power to carry on? Did he inform His Excellency that he could form a ministry that would have the confidence of this House? If he did that, I say to him that he did not advise His Excellency in accordance with the facts.

Before I dwell further upon that, let me refer to the last occasion in this Dominion upon which the Governor General exercised his so-called discretionary powers and avoided a dissolution. It was in the year 1858. Sir John A. Macdonald had just fought an election and had been returned to power with a majority of from twelve to fourteen. He met parliament, and shortly afterwards he was defeated in parliament on a matter which had not been discussed during the election. It was on a side issue, a question, if my memory serves me correctly, as to whether or not this city of Ottawa should be the capital of the Dominion. When he was defeated in the House on that side issue, Sir John A. Macdonald resigned, and His Excellency then called upon George Brown and Dorion and asked them if they could form a ministry. It was really Mr. Brown, and Mr. Brown, co-operating with Mr. Dorion, decided that they could form a ministry, and they so advised His Excellency. They were invited to form a ministry, and did so, and on that same evening they were defeated two or three times in the House of Commons. With what result? With the result that they returned to His Excellency and asked for a dissolution on the ground that one minister having resigned, and they having taken office and having also been defeated, they should receive dissolution. At that time dissolution was refused. If the Governor General had the power to exercise discretion at that time, he exercised it against a dissolution because there was no need for an election, as