

And we had the spectacle in the House of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Motherwell) standing in his place, the sponsor of a measure which he described in his own classical language as a rotten old bill. Now, that was a consequence of one of the departures from the constitutional principle. Let these instances be rare; and especially, I suggest, let them be rare on the part of the present administration. For any moral authority which it may have enjoyed a year ago is very seriously reduced just now. Do not let that moral authority be prejudiced by failure to unite on important measures of any character. Let the government show to the country that it is united and that it can advance opinions that are government opinions and policies that are government policies. The more we follow that course the more we shall lead to the result where there shall be the most immediate answerability of government to parliament. And that, as I understand it, is the perfection of British institutions.

Mr. ROBERT FORKE (Brandon): Mr. Speaker, I had not intended taking part in this debate, because I imagine that the arguments from this part of the House have been pretty well presented. But I almost felt compelled to express my appreciation of the very mild and generous criticism which we have had to-night from the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Meighen). I must compliment him upon his changed attitude; I hope he will continue as he is doing. If he does, I can assure him we will reciprocate. I am not at all afraid of the consequences that are likely to ensue if the proposal now submitted to the House is accepted. I was reading to-night an article in the Manitoba Free Press, when we offered that amendment to the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) pointed out to us the dire consequences that would ensue should that amendment be carried. Nevertheless we persisted, and I find to-night when I take up the most influential paper in the three prairie provinces that it has nothing but praise for our action and declares that we have once again demonstrated to the country that there are only two parties in this House: the party that sits in this quarter of the chamber and the members of the other parties scattered on both sides of the house. Sometimes I have wondered, Mr. Speaker, if there is a reason for our existence, but as the days go by I feel pretty sure that we are exercising a good influence on the government of this country.

I do not know that I have felt exactly pleased with our position in many instances. Some people imagine that to hold the balance of power is a good position to occupy in this House. I am not one of those. I do not want to occupy a position where we must simply sit and wait and throw our influence on one side or on the other as it pleases us. I do not believe that that makes for the best system of government. I should like the privilege and opportunity of having at least some share in formulating the principles and ideas that shall come before this House, and I cannot but believe that the move we are now taking is in that direction.

The right hon. the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Meighen) has said that you cannot prevent a government from resigning. I do not think any one has ever entertained an idea of that kind. We are perfectly aware of the fact that the government can resign any day they choose. But that is a different thing altogether to what is contemplated by this resolution. Very recently in this House we were called upon to decide between voting with the government or forcing an election upon an issue, not of national importance, but in some respects almost trivial.

Now, we are sometimes twitted with being afraid of precipitating an election. I want to put the House right upon that matter without further delay. I take up the newspapers now and then that are not very friendly towards members in this part of the House and I find they indulge in rather cheap talk about our being afraid to go back to our constituencies to fight an election, and consequently the government is quite sure of our support at all times. I want to tell hon. members that in no part of the House are the members so sure of their seats as those in this section. On the amendment to the Address—

Mr. STEVENS: You divided.

Mr. FORKE: I could go back to the constituency of Brandon, Mr. Speaker, and probably I would get an acclamation. So I hope our opponents will not waste any more time twitting us with being afraid of another election, because we are pretty nearly sure of the ground we are taking. The hon. gentleman to my right (Mr. Stevens) says we are divided. Well, he and his friends are never divided. That is one virtue they have, anyway, they are unanimous.

Now, as to parliamentary government. I listened with a good deal of admiration to the speech of the Prime Minister. He went