

either or both of them strangled, politically, in the holes into which they have got themselves. At any rate, we protest strongly to their resorting to the referendum. It is an un-British and unconstitutional device. The people of this country elect specially qualified representatives to make their laws. Those representatives have no right, nor should they with impunity, be permitted, to fling back upon the mob the task which has been deliberately committed to them at the polls, and which they are well paid to perform. The plebiscite on one special general principle may at times be justifiable or excusable, although even that seems doubtful. But the referendum, that is, the submission of a whole measure in all its details for popular consideration, is neither. It is vicious in principle and could not fail to be demoralizing in practice under our policy. Its only conceivable use would be as a snuffbox for time-serving politicians. Those who would resort to it should therefore be met with unmistakable disapproval at the very outset. The politicians have only to take a manly and honest stand on this subject for that matter to find solid ground under their feet at once in any part of Canada. Let them do this, or let the people trample them deeper in the mire of their own making rather than permit, much less help, them to escape from it by still more devious ways. (Opposition cheers.)

Sir, there is a legal way, there is a constitutional way, there is a manly way, and the manly way must be the constitutional way and it happens to be the legal way, too; it is the duty of the Cabinet, of any British Government, to gauge the opinion of the people (Hear, hear, and Opposition cheers.) that is the principal reason for their existence as a Cabinet. They are not to say, holding the position they do, responsible for the legislation and government of the country: "We will not attempt to decide upon matters of great moment, but leave them over to the people."

The instincts and traditions of British Cabinet Government under our system are, that the Cabinet shall comprise a Committee of the Legislature, that they shall be given the duty, not only the power, but the duty, of framing necessary legislation for the people's representatives, a majority of whom are presumed at their backs. They have no other purpose under our constitutional system, and it is their duty to decide whether or not any important measures, such as the Manhood Suffrage question, questions affecting educational matters, questions affecting municipal law, will be in the interests of the people for whom such laws are made. I say that is why they exist, and there is no other reason for their existence under our constitutional system, and they are not to say to the people: "Take a vote and let us see what you are going to do in this matter." As I said a moment ago, it is their duty to gauge the opinion of the people, and if they find they have gauged the opinion of the people properly, they will be sustained by the people, and if they find the opposite, they will be condemned by the people. (Opposition cheers.) Thus in that way, and in that way only, the British constitutional system of Cabinet Government can be worked out successfully to issue which will please the people of the Province of Ontario. (Opposition cheers.)

THE MANLY COURSE.

Let us see what would happen if the Government chose to take this manly and constitutional way. A great deal has been said and I agree with it, on the necessity, not the propriety merely, but on the absolute necessity, because experience has shown it, of having a large majority of public opinion behind any proposed measure of this kind. Sir, I entirely agree with that for many reasons, none of which I will waste your time by attempting to detail here to-night, because everybody is more or less familiar with them. But let us see what would happen if the Government chose to take the constitutional way of doing things. This large majority of the people, which we all agree is necessary, honorable gentlemen say should be found by means of this so-called referendum, and the majority they are going to be content with is a majority of one over half the votes polled at a general election. I do not understand that, Mr. Speaker, to be a very large majority. But suppose for a moment that honorable gentlemen opposite had