

inconvenience, as I said before, but the situation that results is less dangerous than if an appreciable portion of the people in this world of strong political currents, were not represented in parliament. Whether we like it or not, we have groups in this parliament to-day because the people of Canada have desired them to be in parliament, and my advice to all concerned, if I may be permitted to offer advice, is that we should do with the result of the elections as we do with the weather or the order of the universe, simply accept it.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Hear, hear.

Mr. LAPOINTE: If my hon. friend is ready to accept it, I am ready, and am content to let parliament decide who shall rule. The situation as it is must be met. What is needed, I believe, under such circumstances, where there are three or four or more groups, is honest, loyal and open co-operation as between the members of the various groups, without sacrifice of principle or of personal independence, for the purpose of achieving reforms which may be desired in common by members of those groups, and to carry on the administration upon lines which are acceptable to those who have common views, or at least have views on many public questions which are not conflicting. An honourable concert is indispensable, and I think the country is entitled to it. Surely broad-minded people can deal broadly with broad issues, and this can be done in any parliament, even in a parliament where more than two or three parties are represented.

Another aspect of the situation with which I desire to deal briefly is the defeat of the Prime Minister in his constituency, and his temporary absence from the House. This has been the subject of strong criticism on the part of some hon. gentlemen opposite, also in the press, and my right hon. friend the leader of the opposition referred to it this afternoon in terms of bitterness and contempt which I believe would have come with better grace from one who had not gone through his own experience of 1921. In the first place, let me say that we on this side of the House have more than ever the utmost confidence in the distinguished leader of the Liberal party, and I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that his absence from this House will be of short duration. He has suffered the fate that has been the fate at some time or another of all the political leaders of Canada since confederation, with possibly one exception. In former times, however, there were two practices which lessened the risk of personal defeat of party leaders. In the first years

after confederation, especially in 1867 and 1872, there was the custom of spreading a general election over a considerable period of time. This prevailed as regards all the seats during the elections of 1867 and 1872. It continued, until very recently, to be the practice to defer the nomination for at least some seats. The second practice was that of candidates running in two constituencies, a privilege which was abolished during the time of the Union government a few years ago. My right hon. friend the leader of the opposition was the first leader who suffered defeat after this new practice was established, and the right hon. Prime Minister was the second leader to suffer on the same account. I have said that all party leaders have at times suffered defeat. This is not an extraordinary thing when we consider the fact that they have to direct or control the campaign all over Canada and cannot devote to their own constituencies the time and the work which are necessary to the success of any candidate.

Let me say in particular that the great leader of the Conservative party, Sir John A. Macdonald, suffered defeat in his own constituency of Kingston in 1878, when his party swept the country all over Canada. He was defeated in that election by a gentleman named A. Gunn, and Sir John said later that he did not know the gun was loaded. But what happened at that time? Sir John had been a candidate at the same time in the constituency of Marquette, Manitoba, and had been elected by acclamation there. But under the laws that existed at that time one had to be an elector in the province of Manitoba to be qualified as a candidate for election to the House of Commons and Sir John A. Macdonald, being a non-resident, was not qualified and the election was void. His government having been elected to succeed that of Mr. Mackenzie, Sir John ran in Victoria where the election had been deferred. So that it is not an extraordinary thing for a leader to suffer defeat in his own constituency; the new practice now in force in Canada which debar candidates from running in two constituencies makes precarious the fate of political leaders.

The abstention of the Prime Minister from securing a seat for the opening of this parliament is the logical and direct sequence of the situation I have described. Having advised the summoning of parliament for the purpose of deciding the issue as to who should constitute the government, and having decided to refrain from making appointments to public office in the meanwhile, the Prime Minister had debarred himself from taking