

Pitt was offered the Vice-Treasurership of Ireland—the best paid position in the gift of the crown. But he declined, saying he would take no post that would not give him a seat in the Cabinet. He had shown the spirit as well as the genius of his father. Both were proud, but there was nothing low or sordid in either. It might seem like arrogance for a young barrister living on £300 a year, to refuse £5,000 a year, merely because he did not wish to speak and vote for measures he did not help to frame; but in Pitt it was closely allied to virtue.

In about three months Rockingham died, and Shelburne was placed at the head of the Treasury. Fox, Cavendish and Burke immediately sought the ranks of the opposition. Pitt alone had the eloquence and courage necessary to confront these great orators. He was offered the place of Chancellor of the Exchequer, which he accepted in the twenty-second year of his age. Efforts were made, but in vain, to obtain the services of Fox in the new ministry. He had a dislike to Shelburne and would not join him. From this time forward Pitt and Fox were friendly rivals. It was on this occasion that that fatal coalition between Fox and North was formed, Pitt, in referring to it, said, "If this ill-omened and unnatural marriage be not yet consummated, I know of a just and lawful impediment; and in the name of the public weal I forbid the banns."

The Shelburne Ministry was defeated. The King repeatedly offered the leadership to Pitt, but he steadfastly declined. He saw that his time was coming. The reins of power were reluctantly placed in the hands of the coalition.

The new government, trusting to its strength, brought forward a scheme for the government of India. The authority was to be taken from the East India Company and vested in a board of seven commissioners, composed of the intimate friends of Fox and North. This drew upon the ministry the odium of the nation. Wilberforce described it as the genuine offspring of the coalition, marked with the features of both its parents, the corruption of the one and the violence of the other. In spite of opposition it rapidly passed the Commons, and was sent to the Lords. At its second reading an adjournment was carried by a large majority. Fox and North were commanded to give up their seals, and Pitt was appointed First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. For