

House, representing less than two per cent of the membership of this House, have made demands upon the government for certain legislation, which the government has agreed to bring down. On 7th of January, as you will find by referring to page 560 of Hansard, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Woodsworth) sent to William Lyon Mackenzie King, to the right hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. Meighen), and also to the hon. member for Brandon (Mr. Forke) who is leading the Progressives in this House, a letter in which he asked the question:

Is it your intention to introduce at this session legislation with regard to (a) Provision for the unemployed; (b) Old Age Pensions.

Those letters were sent on the 7th of January. On the 8th of January the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre gets up in this House and declares that his little group—I use his own words—

—are so placed as to be able almost to say which of these two sides—

That is to say, Liberals or Conservatives:

—is to carry on the government of the country.

I think the only inference from that is that it was a very plain indication to the government that they had better come across and favour the proposals demanded; otherwise there might be unhealthy consequences for the government. The letter sent to the right hon. leader of the opposition was answered on the 9th of January, and, as we would expect, the answer was clear-cut and to the point. There was no bidding in the answer sent by the leader of the opposition. Following the letter sent to the Prime Minister, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre says that he had an interview with Mr. King. At that interview, recognizing the desperate position in which the government was placed, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and his colleague pressed for further legislation. Their additional demands referred to the Naturalization Act, the Criminal Code, and the Immigration Act. They received no answer from Mr. King. Then came the vote in this House on the 14th of January, in which the government was sustained by a majority of only three. Evidently the member for Winnipeg North Centre thought that was a favourable time to press for something definite from the leader of the Liberal party. Apparently he was not satisfied to accept the verbal assurances of the leader of the Liberal party in regard to this legislation. He asked him to put his views in writing. The hon. member very frankly says that this method

which he has pursued of finding out what the various parties think with regard 5 p.m. to proposed legislation is perhaps somewhat novel in this House.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is a somewhat novel procedure, and one which I think should not be encouraged. On the 28th of January Mr. King writes to the member for Winnipeg North Centre agreeing to his demands, which, I repeat, constitute a supplement to the Speech from the Throne, and constitute also an unblushing bid for support. On the morning of the 29th of January the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre says he received that letter from Mr. King, and on the afternoon of the 29th he rises in his place in this House and puts that letter on Hansard, with these words:

It seems to me—

Says the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre:

—that we must be very grateful indeed that the peculiar combination of circumstances which we find existing in the House at this time has seemingly made it possible to place upon the statute books long over-due legislation in the interests of some of the most needy but least influential elements of our population.

Those were the words of the hon. gentleman in regard to the course which he had pursued. May I point out, Mr. Speaker, that it was in a somewhat similar manner that the celebrated Robin Hood took the purses from the rich at the point of a pistol and distributed their contents amongst the most needy but least influential members of the population? The motive inspiring Robin Hood, the bandit, and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, may do credit to their hearts; but I submit, Sir, that the method is one which would have placed the noose round Robin Hood's neck if they had caught him.

Mr. FORKE: Did Robin Hood use a pistol?

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: That is a poor picture.

Mr. EDWARDS (Frontenac-Addington): Perhaps he used a bow and arrow. My hon. friend must take the language as figurative. At all events I am right in saying that he used force in obtaining the wealth of the richer people and distributing it among the most needy of the population. I do not know how to characterize what is proposed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre under the Criminal Code.

Mr. HEAPS: Would you call old age pensions robbery?