

rush off to New York to discuss what is to be the policy, if there is to be any policy of the Government for the next few months to come.

What are the consequences of the frequent absences of the Prime Minister? One is the rumor that the Prime Minister has either conditionally or absolutely tendered his resignation; that he has no intention whatever of returning to Parliament or of occupying a seat in this House. That rumour may be wholly false, and I hope my right hon. friend will give the House some definite statement on this all important matter. But the circumstance that it is so persistently stated that the Prime Minister has no intention of coming back; that he is merely holding the bridge, so to speak, until his colleagues can find someone to take his place, is having an unsettling effect throughout the whole of this country. What is another effect arising out of the same cause? We are told that not only are we to have the Acting Prime Minister (Sir George Foster), who is present in the House to-day, as the leader, but during the evenings or during other periods we are to have an acting leader of the House in addition.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: Is that a rumour or a fact?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: That we hope to find out during the course of the next few days, but the fact is that we do not know whether we are facing a Government without a head or facing a Government with three heads.

Unfortunate as we are with regard to the Prime Minister, we are almost equally unfortunate with respect to the personnel of the Cabinet. Conditions at the present time remind one of the conditions as they were prior to 1896 when the Government of that day went to pieces. The only difference is that at that time there were seven bolters who went all at once, and to-day there are seven of them who have disappeared, one by one. At that time the political edifice was dynamited from within; to-day it is crumbling to pieces. That is the only difference. Let me read the names of the resignations there have been of ministers: first, Hon. T. W. Crothers, on November 7, 1918; then, Hon. T. A. Crerar, June 16, 1919; Sir Thomas White, July 9, 1919; Hon. F. B. Carvell, August 1, 1919; Hon. S. C. Mewburn, January 15, 1920, and Hon. A. K. Maclean, February 23, 1920. Now it is rumoured that the Prime

[Mr. King.]

Minister himself is to go. Why, Sir, that is a small ministry all in itself, a ministry of very considerable proportions, and with the Government beginning to split up as it is in that way, the public mind is kept in a restless condition to see who is to be the next one to come out. In that way, we are never sure exactly where we are.

Mr. LAPOINTE: Providence may choose.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: While the Government has been indifferent in the regard mentioned, it has been equally indifferent so far as the deliberative nature of this assembly is concerned, in withdrawing ministers to the other Chamber where they are beyond questioning altogether. We have at the present time in the Senate no less than three ministers holding portfolios, the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment, and the Postmaster General. In times like this, of all times, the minister who holds the portfolio of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment should be in this House where he can be questioned, and so should the Minister of Labour; but these gentlemen, along with the Postmaster General, are taken over to the other Chamber, so that the people's representatives here are put in the position, when they ask questions on many matters, of being unable to obtain authoritative replies at the time information is so necessary in connection with public discussion.

Then there has been the further tendency of the gradual shifting over to irresponsible commissions, boards and delegates of one kind or another, of a great deal of the business that should be carried on by the Government itself. I heard a gentleman say the other day that he thought the time had come when we should have government by the Government, instead of government by commissions, delegates and boards of different kinds. The effect of all this is that, in one way or another, instead of the business of Parliament being discussed here in a deliberative fashion, the country is being committed directly and indirectly to policies of which it has no knowledge, by persons who in no way owe responsibility to the people through their representatives in this House.

There are just two further matters to which I will refer, and I think I can promise the House that I shall be through by six o'clock. I have spoken of the representative nature of this deliberative assembly. Let me say a word in regard to what I think the spirit of the Constitution demands with respect to the representative