

*Lack of Confidence Vote*

body of officers of the King in this country. The duty of the government is to lead public policy, domestic and foreign. The government must submit their proposals to the people's representatives and must abide by the verdict of those representatives, favourable or unfavourable, whatever it may be. And a country that is accursed with a government that has not within itself the power of leadership, of showing what the right road is in the light of information that only a government can have, is going to suffer in the race in this world. It is not going to enjoy what it ought to enjoy; it is not going to get the service it ought to get from the government that leads it. A government must submit legislative proposals and must take the leadership, because it is in a position to take leadership; and those who hold the theory that leadership can be taken by the rank and file are opposed to a principle which it seems to me has been vindicated by the march of centuries, of ages. Those in authority must lead. The British constitutional practice has led to this result. While they lead, they may be checked, they may be directed, they may be hurled from power as the penalty of failure. But failure to lead is just as great a failure as any other. The government is answerable for its legislative proposals to this House in just precisely the same way as it is answerable for its administrative acts; it is responsible for the one as it is responsible for the other. It is charged with the responsibility of initiating both, and the government that fails in either respect does not do its duty by the people of the country which it is supposed to lead.

Now, I do not deny for a moment that some of the difficulties which hon. gentlemen to my left have expatiated upon to-day do arise as a consequence of that practice. I do not deny at all that times arise when members of this House have to decide between the support of a measure, on which perhaps the balance of influence, in their own minds, say, would be favourable, and voting against it, when they know that a vote against that measure is a vote of want of confidence in the administration. I know that the consequence is that the question of confidence comes into the question of the merits of the specific proposal or the specific legislation. If that is confusion, then to that degree there is confusion. But that we must abide by. There is no way by which that can be surmounted, except at a cost that would be far greater than any possible results of confusion which hon. gentlemen may have in mind. If a government could come into the House and, either through one of its

own members or through a private member, propose a course of fundamental public policy going to the very root of the prosperity of the country, going perhaps to the very root of our national destiny, and then, having been defeated upon that and having found that it does not meet with the favour of the House, say, "Very well, we will wait a few weeks and come back again with another proposal and see whether it will not meet with approval at the hands of parliament; after we have tested the situation we will come again,"—if that could be done, I say, then the moral authority of government would be gone. If that could be done no government could command any respect. There are times, on matters of minor consequence, where perhaps it is justifiable for an administration to leave to the general vote of parliament, without the lead of government, the direction of its course. But necessarily that must be in regard to a matter of minor consequence; and necessarily, also, it must be rare. For if even that were to occur frequently—and I am making no reference to the present administration, because so far they have not done it frequently—if the government were to come frequently to parliament and say, "Upon this subject we cannot unite, upon this subject we have no opinion, we will leave it to you and will act merely as your messengers and carry out whatever you say, because we have no opinion to offer ourselves," then, I repeat, the moral authority of government throughout the country would be impaired day by day. And no government could long last in this Dominion or in any other British country that frequently submitted itself to the exigencies of situations such as that. Occasionally, I say, it is possible.

Let us for a moment just review the occasion last session when it did occur. The government had no united view on the question of the admission of oleomargarine into this country. Consequently, they said to parliament, "We cannot unite; we have no opinion as a government. You discuss it now and decide what you want and we will carry out your wishes, whatever they may be." Parliament discussed the matter and decided on the permanent admission of oleomargarine into the country. The government found that they could not accept that decision. A division in the government made it impossible to carry out the recommendation. What did they do? They came and said, "We promised to carry out your wishes but we cannot. However, if you will meet us half way we will meet you and admit oleomargarine for twelve months."