

group, though the Unionists as a whole constituted the largest group, the government met the House and was defeated.

In 1910 Mr. Asquith was in power and appealed to the country. The result was 275 Liberals, 40 Labourites, 82 Irish Nationalists, and 273 Conservatives. The government in a minority, but with the largest group, met the House and was sustained.

In December, 1910 Mr. Asquith was again in power, and the general election that year resulted in the return of 272 Liberals, 42 Labourites, 84 Irish Nationalists, and 272 Conservatives. The Liberal government, in a minority and exactly equal to the Conservatives in number, met the House and was sustained.

In 1923 Mr. Baldwin was in power and appealed to the country. The new House was composed of 258 Conservatives, 191 Labourites, 157 Liberals, and nine other members. The Conservative government, in a minority but with the largest group, met the House and was defeated on the Address.

As I said, in no case in England when an opposition party as a result of a general election failed to get a clear majority over all groups did the government resign before meeting the House and allowing parliament to decide the issue.

Mr. MANION: In how many cases that my hon. friend has quoted was the government that went to the country returned as the second or the third group?

Mr. MEIGHEN: Not one.

Mr. LAPOINTE: My right hon. friend is wrong. I quoted two instances.

Mr. MEIGHEN: They are wrong.

Mr. LAPOINTE: They are not wrong. My right hon. friend is wrong; it happens sometimes that he is. I think Cromwell once said to some of his followers: In the name of God, I beseech you, my brethren, to put it into your heads that you may be wrong. I am not a follower of Cromwell, but those words appear to me to be rather wise, and I would commend them to my right hon. friend the leader of the opposition. However, in 1885, the Conservative government, in a minority, and with the second largest group, met the House. In 1892 they were still the second largest group, though afterwards the Liberal-Unionists joined with them. In 1910 Liberals and Conservatives had exactly the same number, and the Liberal government met the House and was sustained.

Reference has been made frequently, especially by my right hon. friend the leader

[Mr. Lapointe.]

of the opposition (Mr. Meighen) this afternoon, to the fact that the government did not get a majority of the total votes cast in the recent election. I admit it; and neither did my hon. friends opposite. But is that unprecedented? It is something which happens in England almost continually, and is a necessary result of the situation that exists in any country where there are more than two parties. In November, 1922, the late Mr. Bonar Law went to the country in Great Britain after having formed a government following the resignation of Mr. Lloyd George, and the result was, in round figures, 5,000,000 votes for the Conservatives, 4,000,000 for the Liberals, and 4,000,000 for Labour. The Bonar Law government was sustained, and it carried on although the votes given to the opponents of the government formed almost 200 per cent of the votes given in favour of the Conservatives.

In 1923, Mr. Baldwin, who had succeeded Mr. Bonar Law, dissolved parliament and appealed to the electors on the policy of protection. The result was, in round figures, 5,500,000 votes for the Conservatives, 4,500,000 for Labour, and 4,300,000 for the Liberals. Mr. Baldwin met parliament, suffered defeat, and a Labour government was formed and carried on the administration, although Labour did not receive one-third of the total vote cast.

Such a situation is unavoidable in any country where there are more than two parties. The cause of the anomaly lies partly in electoral complications resulting from three-cornered fights, but the main reason is that there are three separate organizations each hoping to secure and each securing a proportion of the votes. It is the triangular division of opinion that creates the triangular situation and its consequences. I submit to you, Sir, that the desirable aim is to get a parliament which fairly represents the opinion of the people of Canada as that opinion is expressed. Whatever my own preference may be, whatever inconvenience this may cause in practical administration, it is the aim of parliament to reflect the opinion of the country as it is, and after all, it is based on the ground of social and democratic fairness. Whether we like it or not, the existence, either permanently or temporarily, of more than two parties will continually be creating at some time or another a situation such as the one we are facing in Canada today. Is it such a dire calamity as some of the pessimists claim it to be? I repeat, the fundamental thing is that the people should be represented in accordance with their opinions as expressed at the polls. It may create