

members go back to their homes. Not that this latter was of such importance; the prime importance is to get the business of the country done. But what did the right hon. gentleman do? He offered his resignation to His Excellency—with a string attached. He said, "Hold my resignation in escrow." Do hon. gentlemen know what that means? It means that he did not want his resignation acted upon unless it was necessary to do so. What was in the back of his mind was this; that if anything happened, if perchance Mr. Meighen found himself unable to carry on, then he could go back to His Excellency and recall the resignation which was being held in escrow. I suppose there was some such thought in the back of his mind, but apparently His Excellency refused to accept the right hon. gentleman's resignation on that condition. His Excellency took the view that a resignation was a resignation and that was all. That is what makes the right hon. gentleman rather out of temper. That is what makes him forget the dignity due to his position and, more than that, the dignity due to the country over whose destinies he was presiding.

When the leader of the opposition was asked by the Prime Minister (Mr. Meighen), who was then in opposition, to co-operate with the government if a new ministry should be formed, he flatly refused to do so. He would have no truck with the new government. They had made their bed and they would have to lie on it: that was his attitude. Was that consonant with the dignity of his position? I say it was the attitude of a petulant child. May I in closing read two passages. First I want to quote from Todd, volume 1, at page 318. I want the House to listen to this and make up its mind as to whether the principle here enunciated has been fairly carried out by the leader of the opposition:

In all ordinary circumstances, the ministers chosen by the sovereign—

Please remember that it is the prerogative of the sovereign to choose his ministers.

—are entitled to receive from parliament, if not "an implicit confidence" at the least "a fair trial".

Has my right hon. leader, the present Prime Minister, received that? He has received nothing which, by the greatest stretch of the imagination, could be even called a trial, much less a fair trial. Now let me read one more passage from volume 2 of Todd, at page 194:

In Queensland, on July 20, 1866, a new ministry was formed for the purpose of carrying out a financial policy differing from that upon which their predecessors had resigned office;—

In this case the new ministry was formed to carry out a different financial policy, but that is not our case; we are trying to complete the programme laid out by the late government; we want to pass the estimates they themselves framed; we want to complete the business of the country along the lines laid down by the late government.

—and as it was deemed to be absolutely necessary that certain financial measures should be passed without delay, in order to place the affairs of the colony in a more satisfactory position,—

Of course you will say that is a colony, but I am dealing with the action of parliament, not with the representative of the crown.

—the new ministers appeared in the legislative assembly simply as executive councillors, without departmental officers, with the understanding that immediately after the passing of those urgent measures, they should accept office, and go for re-election.

They did not go even so far as the present government has gone; they came merely as councillors, asking that parliament put them in the position of finishing the business and passing those financial measures, and they were sustained. Let me read the remainder, to show that:

The assembly consented, though not without remonstrance from the opposition to this course. And after these necessary bills were passed, the ministers vacated their seats, on accepting office.

We are asking this parliament to finish its course under the direction of the present acting ministers without portfolio. We are asking that this government be allowed to finish the work laid out by the late government. We are asking that which is no more than our absolute constitutional right, or at any rate we are asking for that which other parliaments and legislative assemblies have conceded in similar circumstances, although in my humble opinion the leader of the opposition took the wrong course when instead of continuing in office he threw down the reins of government and left the country in the condition in which we now find it. Under these circumstances the least he can do is make the progress of the remainder of the programme as easy as possible.

Mr. JEAN-FRANCOIS POULIOT (Temiscouata): I have listened with very great attention to the admirable speech of my hon. friend, and I realize that he and the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George are the two big guns of the Tory party in this House. But the hon. member told you, Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of his speech that he would be short; he did not keep his word, but I make the same promise and I will keep my word.