

country. If this vote asserts that parliament, as representing the Canadian people in this chamber, desires the present government to remain in office, then surely the whole structure of the argument of my right hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. Meighen) falls to the ground and crumbles. On the other hand, if parliament decides that some other government shall be selected as the executive in this House, then the leader of the opposition will form that government with authority; and in either case the supremacy of parliament will have been vindicated.

Why should my right hon. friend desire to become the Prime Minister of Canada if this parliament does not want him? Parliament is going to decide the question; therefore I feel like asking whether my right hon. friend, to use his own choice expression, is so thirsty for the sweets of office that he cannot wait for the expression of their support on the part of the members of this House.

I submit that the course which has been taken by the Prime Minister and the government is in accordance with the practice which has always been followed in the British parliament. Prior to 1868 it had been the practice of all governments in Great Britain to meet parliament after a general election, irrespective of what the outcome of that election was. In that year the Disraeli government, after a general election which had given the Liberal opposition a clear majority of 128, decided to resign without meeting parliament. Six years later the Gladstone government, after a general election which had given the Conservatives in their turn a clear majority of 46, followed Disraeli's example. Since that time it has been the established practice for a government to resign without meeting parliament, but only when an opposition party has secured a clear majority of the votes.

It may be of interest to note that the House of Commons elected on the occasion which is cited as a precedent was the last in which only two parties were represented. Beginning with 1874, every parliament in England has been composed of more than two parties; sometimes there were four or five. This factor had an obvious bearing on the decision of the government after the result of the elections. In fact since 1868 only in nine parliaments has one party had a clear majority over all; in five parliaments no party has had such a majority.

Of course, when a party had a majority over all there was no difficulty. I will divide into three categories the situations which have arisen after general elections in England over a considerable number of years. In the first,

as I said, when the government received a clear majority, it carried on. In 1895, in 1900, in 1906, in 1918 and 1922 the government which appealed to the country was returned with a clear majority over all parties and groups, and of course continued in office. May I note in this connection that the Liberal Unionists from 1886 to 1900 were definitely allied with the Conservatives with whom they gradually formed a single party under the name of the Unionist party? In this regard the Encyclopaedia Britannica in the course of an article on Joseph Chamberlain states as follows:

The 1886 general election returned to parliament 316 Conservatives, 78 Liberal Unionists, and only 276 Gladstonians and Nationalists, Birmingham returning seven Unionist members. When the House met in August, it was decided by the Liberal Unionists, under Lord Hartington's leadership, that their policy henceforth was essentially to combine with the Tories to keep Mr. Gladstone out. The old Liberal feeling still prevailing among them was too strong, however, for their leaders to take office in a coalition ministry. It was enough for them to be able to tie down the Conservative government to such measures as were not offensive to Liberal Unionist principles. . . .

In that year (1895) on the defeat of Lord Rosebery, the union of the Unionists was sealed by the inclusion of the Liberal Unionist leaders in Lord Salisbury's ministry.

In the second case, when one of the opposition parties received a clear majority the government resigned at once, and the opposition party which had a clear majority over all groups took office. This happened in 1868, in 1874, in 1880, in 1886 and in 1924. At every one of those elections one of the opposition parties was returned with a clear majority over all other parties, and the government resigned before meeting parliament.

In the third case, where the government did not secure a clear majority, neither did any other party, the government retained office and met parliament, with the following results, and I am going to give every instance: In 1885 the Conservative government of Salisbury was in power. At the general election there were returned 249 Conservatives, 86 Irish Nationalists, and 335 Liberals. The Conservative government was in a minority with the second largest group, but they met the House and were defeated.

Mr. RYCKMAN: And had a prime minister.

Mr. LAPOINTE: I will deal with that later on if my hon. friend can keep his peace. In 1892 Lord Salisbury was again in power and the general election in that year resulted in the return of 268 Conservatives, 47 Liberal Unionists, 273 Liberals, and 81 Irish Nationalists. In a minority with the second largest