

idea that the ministry should be in any way restricted in its appeal to the people at any time is the very antithesis of democracy. The whole effort manifest in the evolution of government has been to bring the ministry to the point where, if for any reason whatever, it ceases to hold the confidence of parliament it will be obliged to go to the people. Once you take away that safeguard, you have substituted possibilities of autocracy for what is after all the strongest factor in the maintenance of democratic principles of government. May I say this to my hon. friend,—and say it as the result of such experience as I have thus far been permitted to have in the management of parliamentary affairs,—that I should not wish to have anything to do with a government which I did not believe had the confidence of the people. I should not wish to belong to a government that would introduce measures which it did not regard as essential to good government and to the needs of the people, and I should not wish to belong to a government, nor would I think of retaining in a Cabinet for a day, which, bringing into parliament a measure which it believed to be in the public interest, which it was prepared to say was in the public interest, would think of continuing in office after a vote of want of confidence was expressed by a refusal by the House of Commons to pass legislation deemed essential by its directing head. That is the position we take as a government, and we take it in the interest of democratic government, in the interests of government by the people, and as a means of maintaining responsible government, which, as I said in beginning these few remarks is the corner stone of our whole constitutional structure.

Mr. L. J. LADNER (Vancouver South): I have been particularly interested in the speech of the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) on this resolution. He has, in fact, given a speech which can be justly and appropriately applied to a resolution on proportional representation, and I was particularly pleased to hear his words when he said, "In this age of disturbance we should be particularly careful about adopting innovations". Last year this House had a debate on proportional representation in which I took some part, and the Prime Minister also took a part, and how he would be able to harmonize his arguments to-day upon this motion on the theory of responsibility of Cabinet to parliament with the motion which was made last year will only be disclosed when the new motion on proportional representation is introduced into the House some time in

the near future. This resolution, Mr. Speaker, is of a kind of which it can be properly said that it is good in theory but poor in practice, and I say so because the whole structure of the constitution is based on the responsibility of the Cabinet to parliament, and any who have given a study to that question must realize that just so soon as we take the responsibility from the Cabinet we revert to another system of government which is not the British system, but which is more nearly analogous to the system which has been adopted in the United States and in France, where the responsibility of the executive is direct to the president and not to parliament.

Mr. IRVINE: May I ask if the hon. member considers this resolution takes the responsibility from parliament? If so, in what way does it do so?

Mr. LADNER: This resolution, in my judgment, has the effect in practice of a dissipation of cabinet responsibility, because all a cabinet would need to do, instead of taking the high plane which the Prime Minister has suggested and studying carefully the problems which are to be presented to parliament, would be to go in a haphazard way without consideration, and sometimes perhaps without regard to the best interests of the people, and place the matter before parliament, and say afterwards, "Well, in any event, it is the members' fault, and not the Cabinet's fault." When you come to work out a practice of that kind you are going almost as far back as the time of Charles I. when cabinet responsibility rested directly with the sovereign, and when, as a result of the famous Cabal, it was taken from the sovereign and placed directly upon parliament. A similar situation existed, if my recollection serves me right, as late as 1842, when the cabinet responsibility in Canada was direct to the Governor General, and afterwards the responsibility was direct to parliament. In short, Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of the Cabinet to parliament is the keystone of our system of government. It has developed over a long period of time. It has been practised in Great Britain and in many of the dominions, and it has been proven to be the most practical method by which the will of the majority of the people can be expressed in governmental policy and in legislation. Ours has proven to be the flexible constitution, as opposed to the non-flexible or rigid constitution, such as we have in the United States, and just as soon as we take from the Cabinet that responsibility which it should have for