

tion to the house to see that long and honourable traditions are maintained. I would draw the attention of hon. members and of the country to the extent to which in Canada we are departing from the spirit of representative parliamentary institutions. It may come as a surprise to some to learn that though we are now in the fifth session of the nineteenth parliament, during all that time since this parliament opened, the great party opposite has not had a leader in the House of Commons.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Oh! That is pretty tough on me.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: No. My hon. friend was not leader; he was acting leader.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I was the leader until I retired.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: My hon. friend acted very well at times and sometimes very badly.

Mr. GRAYDON: I suppose that applies to the Prime Minister too.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The hon. gentleman was not leader of the Conservative party. May I draw this further fact to the attention of the house. The Conservative party, or the Progressive Conservative party, or whatever name it went by at the time, has not had a leader elected to the House of Commons during the life of this parliament. There have been two leaders of the party who have not been returned to this House of Commons during this parliament. The late Hon. Doctor Manion was the leader of the party at the time of the last election. Doctor Manion was defeated. My hon. friend (Mr. Hanson, York-Sunbury) has said he acted as leader until the party was in a position to choose a leader. Then the party chose a leader. As was expected under our system of government where all who take a part in parliamentary proceedings are supposed to represent the people, are supposed to have a constituency which they represent, the leader first chosen, Right Hon. Arthur Meighen, went before the people in his capacity as leader, asking to be returned for a constituency that he might take his seat in this House of Commons. He was defeated; he was not returned, and the party continued on without its leader in the House of Commons. That lasted for thirteen months. Then we had this Winnipeg convention at which John Bracken was elected, and at which he began to put forth bills of rights or other documents of high importance to legislative bodies. But up to the present time John Bracken has not found a seat. He represents

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

nobody so far as representation in this House of Commons is concerned. I say—

Mr. GRAYDON: That would be more applicable to my right hon. friend than to Mr. Bracken.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I beg the hon. gentleman's pardon. I say, standing here speaking for the rights of the people in their parliament, that the only man who has a right to speak in the name of the people as a leader is one who occupies a seat in this parliament or who has received the approval of the electorate, giving him the right to speak as a representative. The fact that Mr. Bracken sat in a provincial legislature for a number of years does not entitle him to be regarded as a representative of the people of Canada at this time in dealing with the public affairs of this parliament; much less does it entitle him to put forth bills of rights and have those bills of rights quoted in this House of Commons when he himself is not here to stand up for them.

May I direct the attention of my hon. friend, since he has referred to a "bill of rights," to the fact that the Bill of Rights was an important statute enacted for the purpose of securing to the Commons of Britain, and to the parliament of Britain, its rights and privileges. One of the rights and privileges of free people is that there shall be a free parliament, and that their representatives shall sit in that parliament to determine the laws and policies that are to govern. What is to become of parliamentary institutions if we begin to substitute for membership in the House of Commons itself, or in parliament itself, some form of absentee leadership? That is a new development in the political life of our country—absentee leadership over a period of years.

My hon. friend knows that so far as this side of the house is concerned we have been prepared to facilitate the entry of Mr. Bracken into the House of Commons—

Mr. GRAYDON: As you did for Mr. Meighen.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The people expressed their opinion.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): No, no.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I may say that any leader who cannot obtain a seat is not one who ought longer to claim the right to lead a political party.

Mr. GRAYDON: My hon. friend was in exactly that position.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I am just directing attention to the change that is coming over the spirit of our political institutions when