

*Lack of Confidence Vote*

the present parliamentary practice, the opposition has not only the privilege of debating the proposed government measures, but also has the right to propose amendments which under certain conditions may be accepted by the government. I have here Mignault's hand-book on Parliamentary Procedure, and I find the following quotation at page 147:—

Up to a certain stage the government may accept certain amendments that the House has approved, even contrary to its wishes, but you cannot force it to sanction motions which would change the nature of an important measure; under such circumstances its duty would be to beg leave to withdraw the measure or resign.

That is evident and it has been in almost continuous practice ever since the existence of our parliament; that the opposition, criticizing a government measure, may force the latter to include amendments which are in the interest of sound legislation; however, these amendments must not go to the extent of changing the nature of the proposed legislation, because if so, the amendments proposed by the opposition would evidently amount to a vote of lack of confidence.

The present debate on the important question of government responsibility recalls to my mind another period of our history. I think we should watch with a jealous eye over the prerogatives which were then obtained by our forefathers. If I glance over the past, during the first days of Union government, when parliament met at Kingston, in 1841, I come across parliamentarians—and they were of our race—like the Vigers and the Morins, who joined the reformists of Ontario to demand from the Draper government, an acknowledgement of the principle of government responsibility.

It is due to their untiring efforts and just claims, that the Draper government found itself forced to resign and to make way for these illustrious men, Baldwin and Lafontaine, who secured for us responsible government.

Some of the reasons brought forth by these statesmen are as follows:

The immediate advisers of the representative of the Crown must enjoy at all times the confidence of the representatives of the people, so as to maintain between the different branches of the legislature the harmony so necessary to peace and the security of the public, whose well understood wishes and interests must be the rule of the government of this province.

Such were the contentions put forward in 1841, during the first period of Union government, and these contentions were in favour of responsible government.

Monuments to Baldwin and Lafontaine have been erected close to here and the visitor has but to walk around this building to

[Mr Fortier.]

admire those who obtained for us responsible government. This resolution stands in the way of this responsibility and I am therefore opposed to it.

Hon. G. P. GRAHAM (Minister of National Defence): I think that probably I cannot add anything to the debate which has taken place, but one or two things have struck me. It makes a difference whether you are in the government or out of it, which way you look at these things. A man that is a sworn adviser of His Majesty, with all the responsibility he has to carry as to what that advice shall be, cannot lightly pass that responsibility on to another. On the other hand, the man that is not in the government has in his sphere, a full responsibility just as far-reaching as that of a member of the government and—I say this in all kindness—he ought to be prepared, no matter what the consequences may be, to accept that full measure of responsibility in every vote that he gives. If the result be the defeat of a government, then let the government be defeated. But it rests with the member himself to take that responsibility and, if this resolution passes, I submit that any member who desired to make himself popular in his constituency, could do so and escape the responsibility that ought to be his if the consequences of that vote meant the defeat of the government.

I agree with the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Meighen) that a government itself must largely decide whether a vote is of sufficient magnitude or importance to justify that government in resigning; but if a majority of the members of parliament vote against the government that indicates that it has not the confidence of parliament, no matter what may be said by the member who moves the resolution or members who vote in favour of it. To declare to the House that a motion is not a want of confidence motion does not make it so. The government, in a large measure, must decide that for itself.

Another point that has struck me is this. On this continent there are two distinct forms of government which we can contrast. In the United States, the members of the cabinet do not sit in either the Senate or the House of Representatives. Their cabinet is a distinct and separate body, whose members do not appear in congress to propose or to defend their measures. We have, we think, the advantage in that respect, in that the members of a government in Canada must have a place in one House or the other to explain the legislation or to defend the