

It did appeal to the country late in the winter of 1918, I think, but only after that Parliament speaking from memory, for seven or eight years, whereas its term by constitutional practice is about five years. There is therefore no argument to be drawn from any British case.

Here in this country we were elected on a war issue, we actually went to the country in war time. The British Government did nothing of the sort. They did not go to the country at all until after the war was over. The war being over they appealed to the country, whereas we went to the country just shortly before the war was over; that is the difference between us and the British Government.

My hon. friend says: You went into power as a war Government, and now that it is peace time it is your business to step out. If that is the case, a peace Government that is elected in peace time should step out when war comes. Does my hon. friend remember the hue and cry he himself raised and that his leader and the members of his party raised, when, in 1914 after the outbreak of war, the Government then in office, a peace Government, elected in peace time, was complained of for even contemplating an election at that time. Why, they fairly tore the purple off the clouds for fear we would go to the people, although we, a peace Government, were then confronted with the difficulties of war. My hon. friend's argument, if there was anything in it, would work both ways.

The fact is both the spirit and the letter of the constitution of this country may be defined thus: The term is five years; the usual practice is four years; the Government is entitled to hold office during that term, provided it maintains the confidence of the representatives of the people as reflected in the parliament elected. In the history of this country or any other that I have any knowledge of the only departure from such a practice has been on occasions where some overwhelmingly important issue has arisen, where a departure of policy of major consequence is proposed by the Administration, and when, as a result, it is desirable that the will of the people as to that departure be known. Those occasions have arisen in Great Britain; they have arisen in Australia. Will my hon. friend say that they now have arisen here? Is there a great, sharp issue of public policy dividing this House? Is there, Mr. Speaker? Did you hear anything of it in the speech of my hon. friend? I would like if such an issue could be raised, but

we do not propose any radical departure of public policy in the first place. We do not propose to give the people of this country anything save what they have voted for almost times without number in this country.

Where, I ask again, is the great issue that has arisen? Oh, my hon. friend says, the only issue is that you should not be there—that I should be there instead of you. Well, what would be the issue in the country if we dissolved Parliament? The issue my hon. friend raises would be settled once dissolution took place. He says we should appeal just for the sake of an appeal, that we should have an election just for the sake of an election. Well, you have an election once you dissolve Parliament, but on what are you going to fight the election in this case?

If a big issue does arise, if it is clear-cut and unmistakable, if it goes to the very fundamentals of public policy, then there is justification for a government laying down the reins of office which the people have entrusted to them, even before the full maturity of its term. But until that does arise, and in that form, while a government maintains the confidence of Parliament, it is recreant to its duty to depart from office and abandon the trust reposed in it and be stampeded by the voice of a party press or a party leader, whoever he may be. The hon. member quotes words used by myself in Winnipeg in 1917. By every word of that speech, by every word of that appeal, I stand. I invite the honourable gentleman to quote more from that speech; I do not think it will detract at all from the quality of his own. He quotes as well from speeches of the hon. Minister of Immigration and Colonization (Hon. Mr. Calder), by whose remarks also I stand. Undoubtedly, if three, four, or five members of a government retired at the same time and for the cause assigned by the honourable member for Marquette (Hon. Mr. Crerar), that is a blow from which perhaps no administration could recover. That is one thing. For one minister to retire merely because he disagrees on a point of public policy—not, mark you, because he does not think we should touch the tariff, but because he thinks we did not touch it enough, for that is why he retired—that is a very different thing from many men retiring at the same time because of a divergence of views on a great issue of public policy. It is one thing for one to retire at one time and another at another time merely because they cannot give more