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Letters to The Editor.

Letters to appear in this column must be signed for publication with true signatures of the writers. Preference is given to brief communications, but the editor does not undertake to publish all letters received.

MR. EWART'S COMMENT.

Editor, Citizen: Believing as I do that the constitutional question is the only one of any importance, I cannot allow Mr. Meighen's treatment of it to pass without comment. His only defence of the refusal of the Governor-General to act upon Mr. King's advice to dissolve parliament is, that Mr. King asked for dissolution "in order to prevent the House from expressing its opinion of his government." That being so, Mr. Meighen contends that Mr. King "had no right to ask for it, and had no right to get it." To that view there are several replies:

1. Mr. King has said that the ground suggested by Mr. Meighen for his request for dissolution did not exist. Mr. Meighen, in reply, says that Mr. King is not telling the truth. Into that controversy I do not enter.

2. Mr. King has said that in his conversations with His Excellency, prior to the refusal to dissolve, no reference was made to the Stevens' motion pending in the House. Mr. Meighen knows whether that statement is or is not true. His conversations with His Excellency must have satisfied him as to it. And I am not aware that he has questioned its truthfulness. If it be true, it makes clear that His Excellency did not base his refusal upon the ground suggested by Mr. Meighen—indeed, that he did not think that the pendency of the motion was a ground upon which refusal could be based. If he had thought otherwise, he would have referred to it in one of the conversations. Mr. Meighen's suggestion, therefore, that an endeavor to escape a vote of censure was the ground upon which His Excellency based his refusal is put a mere suggestion of Mr. Meighen. It does not accord with the facts.

3. Admitting that "no government in England has been refused dissolution in a hundred years," Mr. Meighen said that:

"No government or Prime Minister of England or of any Dominion ever asked for dissolution in the whole history of responsible government, in the whole history of parliaments, while there was a motion of censure, or even of want of confidence, hanging over its head in the House of Commons."

In my criticism of Mr. Meighen's previous Auditorium speech (The Citizen, 22 July last) I pointed out that the pendency of an adverse motion was quite immaterial. Without exhausting the instances, I re-

ferred to the occasions of 1831, 1841, 1859, 1886, and 1924 as cases in which an adverse motion had not only been made, but had actually been passed by the House and become a resolution of censure, and yet the respective ministries had asked for and obtained dissolutions.

I would stress particularly the case of 1924, in which Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's defeat was based upon a much more serious assertion than anything charged against the King government. An article of extremely seditious character had appeared in "The Weekly Worker," a Communist paper. The editor, one Campbell, was arrested and put upon trial; but before the proceedings had gone very far, the prosecution was withdrawn under the direction of the attorney general. The charge against the government was that the withdrawal had been dictated by the Communist wing of the Labor party; and Mr. MacDonald having treated a resolution providing for inquiry as one of want of confidence, the vote adverse to him was of highly condemnatory character. It stood at 364 to 198. That, however, had not the slightest effect upon the King's action when Mr. MacDonald asked for dissolution.

I think it is probable that no case of a government in England being refused a dissolution ever occurred. It is admitted that there has not been one within a hundred years. I have not been able to find that there was ever one. And the reason is clear, namely, that of all the prerogatives attributed to the King, the most indefensible would be a right to prevent a reference to the people of some subject or some political situation. No sovereign in England would dare any such interference, and if (as I take it) Mr. Meighen agrees that the Governor-General here occupies the same position as the King in England, he was wrong in advising His Excellency to persist in his refusal of Mr. King's request.

Referring to somebody's allegation of the invalidity of certain orders-in-council of the present government, Mr. Meighen challenges me to take a case to the courts instead of—

"Haranguing Progressives in the quiet of your parlor, doing chore work for the Liberal party."

Not only do I decline the challenge, but I add that, not having considered the question, I have no opinion, and have not expressed any, upon it. If, without study of it, I should hazard a surmise, I should say (a bit of a chore for the Conservative party) that upon that point Mr. Meighen is right. I make no complaint, however, of his reference to me. At a time when, by general consent, the injunction of the ninth Commandment has been temporarily suspended and a general flood of vilification been substituted for argument, everyone must be content to absorb more or less of the incidental splashing.—JOHN S. EWART, Ottawa, Sept. 8, 1926.