

a Gilbertian performance as that witnessed in this House of Commons during the last four days of the last parliament, when hon. gentlemen opposite undertook to occupy seats on the treasury benches. Anything more ludicrous than the sudden entry upon the political stage of that phantom ministry, and its equally sudden exit, I do not think has been enacted in politics anywhere. As I look at hon. gentlemen opposite at the moment and seek to divine the thoughts of that phantom ministry, as they pass through their minds even at this time, I imagine I can hear them saying to one another:

She was a Phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely Apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament.

That is what it was, the late ministry, a phantom and an apparition, and that is how it will be viewed by history.

I would be prepared to leave the matter there were it not that my hon. friend still contends that there was no constitutional issue. For purposes of record it is perhaps important that with respect to that phantom ministry the government's position should be clearly stated. We take the view that the whole proceedings of that ministry from beginning to close were unconstitutional, that it never was a ministry in any true sense of the term as ministries are understood under the British constitution. When was there a ministry in British history that undertook to carry on the government of the nation, having no authority from parliament and no authority from the country? That was the position of the ministry that assumed to carry on the government of this country for a period of some eighty days.

Mr. MOTHERWELL: Freebooters!

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: May I remind the House of the last word of the last parliament with respect to that so-called ministry? It will be found, Mr. Speaker, in the resolution passed at midnight of July 1 and reported in the Votes and Proceedings of that day:

That the actions in this House of the honourable members who have acted as ministers of the Crown since the 29th of June, 1926, namely the hon. members for West York, Fort William, Vancouver Centre, Argenteuil, Wellington South, and the hon. senior member for Halifax, are a violation and an infringement of the privileges of this House for the following reasons:—

1. That the said hon. gentlemen have no right to sit in this House, and should have vacated their seats therein, if they legally hold office as administrators of the various departments assigned to them by orders in council.

2. That if they do not hold such offices legally they have no right to control the business of government in this House and to ask for supply for the departments of which they state they are acting ministers.

That was the verdict the House of Commons pronounced on that particular ministry of that day. I say that when that verdict was pronounced that so-called ministry should instantly have resigned; it should not have attempted to continue to advise the sovereign's representative, and, least of all, should it have attempted to advise the sovereign's representative to dissolve parliament without so much as the formality of a prorogation. I say that the whole proceedings of that ministry from beginning to close were unconstitutional. There was no ministry while parliament was in session. There was but one minister sworn to office. The so-called acting ministers acknowledged that not one of their members was a minister of the crown. There can be no such thing as a ministry de facto. There must be a ministry de jure. There was no ministry de jure. That was the view that parliament took of the ministry, and that was the view that was before the country when the elections were held, and the country endorsed that view, and so I say, Mr. Speaker, that except to the extent that this parliament by its action explicitly or impliedly is prepared to countenance or regularize what was done by that administration, everything that it did was unconstitutional and is actually without any binding effect.

Mr. C. H. CAHAN (St. Lawrence-St. George): Mr. Speaker, unexpectedly I am requested by the leader of the opposition to continue the debate. As the hour is quite late and as we have had a somewhat lengthy sitting, and this is really our first day, I would suggest to the Prime Minister that he concur in my moving the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Mr. Speaker, I shall be very happy to concur in the motion, but I hope that if we adjourn now, my hon. friend will agree not to make his speech much longer as a consequence.

Mr. CAHAN: I will promise the Prime Minister to be very brief.

On motion of Mr. Cahan the debate was adjourned.

On motion of Mr. Mackenzie King the House adjourned at 9.42 p.m.