

*Lack of Confidence Vote*

government shall be defeated. That power will be in parliament. At the present time the Cabinet has the decision as to whether a resolution shall or shall not be considered as a want of confidence motion. We want to take that from the hands of the Cabinet and leave the decision with parliament.

Mr. McQUARRIE: One further question.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order. Of course, the question can only be allowed with the consent of the hon. member who has the floor. Do I understand that the hon. member is willing?

Mr. IRVINE: Yes.

Mr. McQUARRIE: Would the hon. member tie up the government so that it could not hand in its resignation if it saw fit at any time?

Mr. IRVINE: I do not know anything that can prevent any government or any member of any government from resigning at any time they wish to do so. They may do so now, singly or in a body, and they may do so after such a resolution as this passes; but I scarcely anticipate a stampede of that character if the resolution should pass.

I believe the practice against which this resolution declares should be abandoned because it is humiliating to the representatives of the people. In instances such as I have given they find themselves forced at times to abandon the principles under which they have been elected; and being forced thus to abandon their principles, they are considered in the public mind as being untrue and unfaithful servants of the people. Good men in this way find themselves robbed of their good characters in the eyes of the public. I do not think it is amiss to emphasize here a fact that we have all met with, that the politician in Canada has a very low status indeed in the estimation of the public, and it is the present practice that has helped more than anything else to undermine the confidence of the people in their representatives. I think it should be part of our duty as members of this House to raise the status of parliamentarians, that we may be as noted in the coming years for standing firm to our principles and true to our word, as we have been noted in the past for forgetting about them in such instances as I have just given to the House.

But there is another side to this question that is as bad or even worse than the personal side. By this practice now prevailing, bad issues may be passed in order to save an otherwise very good government, and on the

[Mr. Irvine.]

other hand, a good issue may be defeated to save a bad administration. By confusing these two things, namely the issue before the House and the fitness of the administration to govern, the members of parliament are often placed in a position where they must either defeat the measure in which they believe, or defeat the government. But even if a good measure were passed to save a good government, that would not balance the sheet. We had better put governments in a position where they do not need to be saved, and that is the purpose of this resolution. The life of the administration and the merits of legislative proposals should not be confused. If the administration is to be responsible to parliament, it should allow parliament a free mind to come to a conclusion on resolutions, or bills without embarrassment of any kind whatever. I believe a reasonable, clean, energetic, efficient and courageous administration has nothing to fear from a Canadian parliament. Parliament, however, does have something to fear from the supremacy of the cabinet. I believe that a bill brought in by the cabinet should not be considered in any way different from a bill brought in by a private member. But such is not the case as things are now. Here, then, is a protection which I would invite you anti-protectionists to consider. Here is a practice by which a cabinet protects itself by its very threats to carry through what legislation it may wish to promote, or defeat what legislation it might desire to defeat. That is a protective wall which it might be in our interests to-day to break down by the passing of this resolution. I urge the passing of this resolution in the interests of every member of this House. We are all interested, and we are all concerned. It is true, those of us who happen to sit in the so-called opposition benches are not so directly affected by a vote of no confidence as the hon. members on the other side. But still we have to consider it too. I do not know whether it would have been a very wise thing for this parliament to have decided to bring on an election on the last issue on which we voted. We had to consider that in connection with the issue, for it is not only the government that is affected, but everybody is affected.

Look at it from another point of view. I do not believe hon. members on this side of the House, from the left wing of the opposition down this far at least, are particularly anxious to defeat either this government or any other government. I believe their attitude as expressed is one of co-operation. Personally, I do not wish to defeat any govern-