

to have assigned that as a reason for their withdrawal from the Government, that is if Sir Mackenzie Bowell had been sustained. Now, let me read another paragraph from his address :

Under these circumstances we thought it our duty to retire, and in this manner to pave the way, if possible, for the formation of a Government whose Premier could command the confidence of all his colleagues, could satisfy the Liberal-Conservative party that its strongest elements were at its head and impress the country that it had a Government which was united and had power to govern.

Now, Sir, the one astonishing thing in this statement is that there is here an assumption that the hon. gentlemen on the other side of this House had the right to choose a Prime Minister for His Excellency. I deny that altogether. It is the prerogative of the Crown to choose whom it pleases as Prime Minister. The House may or may not, the country may or may not, support the party so chosen. The hon. gentlemen assume that in this matter the Conservative party must have a caucus, that its representatives must determine who their leader shall be, and that they must inform His Excellency that the leader so chosen must be the Prime Minister. I deny any such pretension altogether. There are numerous precedents which would show that no such right can be maintained. The hon. gentleman, so we understand, has undertaken to invite across the Atlantic the High Commissioner to lead the Conservative party. The Conservative party are, no doubt, in desperate straits. But that is not due to the incapacity of the Prime Minister; it is due to the reckless and extravagant course which the Administration have taken for a period of years past. These hon. gentlemen have excited high expectations in the public mind which have not been realized, and the public are disappointed. The elections which have taken place show that the public have no confidence in the hon. gentlemen. These gentlemen have attempted to repair their fortunes. In their desperate extremity they have invited Sir Charles Tupper from his office of High Commissioner to this country, and when he arrives here, they undertake to create a crisis, and they do create it just at the most inconvenient time for the country, when Parliament is called for the discharge of its public duty. Now, the hon. gentlemen, I think, will find that Sir Charles Tupper cannot improve very much the position of the Conservative party. The public have not as much confidence in Sir Charles Tupper as have the hon. gentlemen who sit on the Treasury benches—I should say who sat on the Treasury benches—because the hon. gentlemen who are retiring from the Government are they who are the friends and defenders of the High Commissioner. In this House and on that side of it there are a large number of members, and if we look to the Senate we find that nearly the

whole of that body is filled up with men who have done service for the Conservative party. These hon. gentlemen who have retired from the Government in effect declare that none of those whom they have advised His Excellency to appoint to seats in the other Chamber are men of ability, are men competent to lead their party. They look over this House and they say to the hundred and odd members who support the Administration that there is not one amongst them competent to lead the Conservative party. And so they appeal to Sir Charles Tupper on the other side of the Atlantic and ask him to come over and help them in their extremity. Now, Sir, I am not going to judge of the gentleman as leader of the Conservative party, but I say that it is, to say the least, in extremely bad taste to ask him here under the circumstances and to create a crisis by attempting to force him into the Administration. The hon. gentleman who has submitted to this House the address which was read yesterday as a defence for the course of those who have retired from the Government, will find that the country will regard it, not so much an evidence of the incapacity of the man who led them, as an evidence of the desperate straits in which the leaders of the Conservative party are placed in this House, and the want of confidence in leaders of that party in the country.

Mr. WALLACE. Before that motion is declared carried I wish to make this statement. Yesterday, two hon. members of this House informed me that they had learned from the hon. member for Haldimand (Mr. Montague) that I was responsible for the anonymous letter alleged to have been written by the hon. gentleman himself. Mr. Speaker, I have to deny absolutely the truth of the charge of the hon. member for Haldimand, and to say that I did not write said anonymous letter or letters, or inspire the writing of those letters, and I did not know that any such letter or letters were in existence for many months after they were received.

Mr. MONTAGUE. I think, Sir, though this is a matter upon which my lips, as a recent member of the Privy Council, ought to be sealed in this House at the present moment, I cannot allow the statement made by the hon. member for West York (Mr. Wallace) to pass without saying a few words to this House. In doing so I trust that I shall not break any rule of courtesy or decency which should be observed as between a member of the Privy Council of Canada and other members of that Privy Council, and the representative of the sovereign in this country. First, let me say that three days ago, I think, an insinuation was made to me that I was guilty, or that I was charged by an hon. gentleman who belonged to the Privy Council, with having written certain anonymous letters in rela-