

the Governor General and asked for a dissolution. We have on record what purports to be a complete statement of the grounds which he presented to His Excellency the Governor General in asking for that dissolution. Certain issues were raised which he declared to His Excellency should be placed before the people of this country for a decision, and it was still further stated that for him to carry on the government of the country it was necessary to increase the number of his supporters in this House of Commons so that he would have a majority over both parties in opposition in this House. The result of that election is well known. The right hon. gentleman came back with a minority, with a very substantial reduction in the number of members who supported him in this House, and the two parties which had opposed him in that general election were together in a very considerable majority. What happened then? The Prime Minister of that day, although it was admitted that he had not secured popular support either of the electors or of the members elected by the voters of Canada, approached His Excellency the Governor General and asked that parliament might be summoned in order that the issue, as to whether the majority of parliament would support him for the time being, might be placed before parliament. His Excellency the Governor General granted that request and parliament was convened.

Then came another issue. We now know and it is clear that the usual constitutional practice was to summon parliament; when parliament convened, to have it elect a Speaker, and to place before parliament the issue as to whether the Prime Minister and his government had the confidence of parliament at that time, before any speech from the Throne could be brought down. Still, when the request was made to His Excellency the Governor General, he, to a slight extent, departed from the recognized constitutional practice in order to show to the existing Prime Minister every consideration and assistance possible in the administration of the government of this country.

We then had a speech from the throne brought down which contained little or no reference whatever to any issue placed before the people of this country in the preceding general elections, a speech which contained captivating references to proposed legislation which was likely to receive the favourable consideration of one of the groups in this House. The leader of the opposition, then Prime Minister, prior to that point, so far

[Mr. Cahan.]

as we can see from the outside, certainly had received as favourable and as considerate treatment as it was possible for the crown to give to a Prime Minister who held the complete confidence of the crown. But then this matter of the administration of the Department of Customs came up; charges were made in this House and referred to the special committee, and that committee of nine members, four of whom were supporters in this House of hon. gentlemen opposite, brought in, through the chairman of that committee, also a supporter of the Prime Minister, a report, adopted unanimously, containing serious reflections upon the government which had been administering the customs laws of this country. Even if that report had passed, of itself it contained such severe reflections that no Prime Minister having a proper regard for the dignity of his office and his personal self-respect would have continued to hold office after that report had been adopted. Amendments were proposed to that report reflecting more seriously upon the administration of the government, and the temper of the House was indicated by three votes, none of which technically may have been a direct vote of want of confidence in the government, but each and every one of which reflected the studied and considered judgment of this House, to the effect that this House was prepared to approve and to pass the amendment which reflected so seriously upon the government.

Those facts being known to His Excellency, the Prime Minister of that day, the present leader of the opposition, according to his own statement, approached His Excellency and asked for a dissolution, at a time when a resolution of censure was before the House, when it was perfectly clear that that resolution of censure would be adopted although opposed by hon. gentlemen who composed the ministry. There was then a discretion in His Excellency the Governor General, as stated by all the authorities, as there would have been a discretion in the crown of England, to refuse to grant that dissolution at that time and under those conditions, until the right hon. gentleman and his government had submitted themselves to the judgment of this high court of parliament to which they had appealed.

Talk about a storm arising in this country over the action of His Excellency! If there ever should be a governor general holding that high office, who should become such a partisan of any party as to grant dissolution to a prime minister in order to enable him