

I do not wish to take up too much time in discussing this matter further. I might, however, direct the attention of my right hon. friend to a very important circumstance, namely, that fortunately some of his former colleagues in the late ministry view their obligations to the people in a different way from that in which he is prepared to view his obligations at present. We have had five resignations by Liberal members of the previous ministry, and I think all of them have been on the ground that the hon. members who resigned felt that when they entered the Unionist administration the public believed they were entering a war administration and that when that administration had served its purpose, their right to continue longer in office was at an end. On June 4, 1919, the hon. member for Marquette (Mr. Crerar) resigned; on August 2, 1919, the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton (Mr. Carvell) resigned; on January 1, 1920, the hon. member for Hamilton East (Mr. Mewburn), then Minister of Militia and Defence, resigned; on February 23, 1920, the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Maclean) resigned, and on July 8, 1920 the then President of the Privy Council, the hon. member for Durham (Mr. Rowell) resigned. All of these gentlemen have read their obligations to the people in terms wholly different from those in which my right hon. friend is reading his obligations at the present time. They, at least, did not have any mental reservations one way or the other in what they were leading the people to believe at the time they entered the Unionist administration and appealed to the country.

I have mentioned certain members of the late Government who have read their obligation in a different way. There is one other member of the Government that I should like to quote in the matter of obligation, because he happens to be a member of my right hon. friend's administration. I think there are only two of the original so-called Liberal members of the day who went into the Union Administration who are now in my right hon. friend's ministry. I have here a quotation from a speech made by my hon. friend the Minister of Immigration and Colonization (Mr. Calder) in this Parliament at the time the hon. member for Marquette resigned from the Government, and perhaps it will be worth while to give it just to show how my hon. friend viewed the matter of resignations at that time. Here is what he said (Hansard, p. 3341):

Let me ask hon. members of this House what would be the consequences if we all followed [Mr. Mackenzie King.]

the course taken by the hon. member for Marquette (Mr. Crerar). Suppose the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Carvell) resigned, and the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Rowell), and the Acting Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Maclean), and myself and others should resign—

at which point there was some interruption, when my hon. friend continued:

Do not be too sure, my friends, the task of carrying on government in this country and the responsibilities that are thrown upon public men are not so alluring as some hon. gentlemen seem to think. I say that if those resignations did take place there would immediately be a political crisis in this country, and one thing, and one thing only, could happen: either the Prime Minister would have to appeal to the country, or he would have to advise the Governor General to call upon my friend who leads the Opposition to form a new Government.—(Hansard, p. 3341).

Well, all these resignations, and others, save alone that of my hon. friend, have taken place. Are we to assume, then, that he is the slender thread on which the fate of the ministry hangs; that it is to his presence in the ministry we owe the aver-sion of a political crisis, and the one thing and one thing only that could happen? If that be so, let me assure my hon. friend that the greatest service he can render the country is to drop out of the ministry just as speedily as possible.

I come now to the last mentioned of the arguments enunciated, namely, that the leader of the Opposition himself does not desire an election. I would hesitate to make mention of this contention, since it is so puerile, were it not that my right hon. friend himself has put it forward on different occasions, and one or two of his colleagues have busied themselves whispering it about.

What, may I ask, have my wishes or desires to do with this matter, or, for that matter, the wishes or desires of my right hon. friend, or any other member of this House on either side of you, Mr. Speaker?

It is not a matter of wish or desire; it is a matter of right and duty: the right of the people to self-government, and the duty of their representatives in Parliament to be scrupulous in the defence of that right whenever it appears to be infringed. It is the basis of all our liberty, and our one sure defence against arbitrary behaviour and revolutionary tendencies in matters of government.

My right honourable friend says he has been all over Canada and has heard no demand for a general election. That only proves that his hearing is not as good as my own. I may tell him that I also have