

very discussion which is now taking place. We wanted to show to the House and to the country that we are not usurping the functions of government and that we place ourselves in the judgment of the House in that regard. We are inviting expressions of opinion. I am going to address to the House a few remarks, observing moderation, avoiding the use of strong epithets and adjectives, and with a full consciousness of the ultimate consequences of the present proceedings and the result which will follow the vote which is going to be taken on this motion. This parliament was elected on the 29th October. I am quite willing to admit that the result was not quite as decisive as some of us would have liked it to be on both sides of the House. I will not dispute the figures given by the right hon. leader of the opposition as to the number of Liberals, Conservatives, Progressives and Independents who were successful in the election, nor as to the plural vote in the country, except perhaps to say that the point raised by the hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Bourassa) was well taken, and it is rather interesting to-day to see the right hon. leader of the opposition claiming, as his followers, the men who ran the elections in Quebec against us stating, that they were just as independent of the leader of the opposition as they were of the Prime Minister.

It shows that we were right in asserting that my right hon. friend was really the leader of their party and was running his election in Quebec by proxy. The government met as soon as possible after the date of the election, and after having considered the situation as created by the result, the right hon. the leader of the government tendered his advice to His Excellency, and in a statement which he issued and which appears in the Ottawa Journal of November 5, he said:

After several interviews with His Excellency, at which the position brought about by the recent general election was fully discussed and all alternatives presented, I have taken the responsibility of advising His Excellency to summon parliament for the earliest practicable date in order to ascertain the attitude of the parliamentary representatives towards the very important question raised by the numerical position of the respective political parties. His Excellency has been pleased to accept this advice.

The advice was accepted by the representative of His Majesty, and as the dissolution of the last parliament contained a proclamation that the next session would commence on the 10th December, that date was tentatively taken for the meeting of the House of Commons, if the returns of all the members could be sent in prior to that date.

Later it was found—and the Chief Electoral Officer gave advice to that effect—that the returns could not be sent in prior to the 10th December, that the earliest possible date for the summoning of parliament would be in the early days of January, and the 7th January was fixed for the opening of parliament. Meanwhile, the government expressed its intention not to make any important appointments to public positions in Canada, and indeed that no question of real importance would be settled, until the representatives of the people had a chance to decide who were going to constitute the executive in the next parliament. This decision has been sharply criticized by the right hon. leader of the opposition who issued a statement on November 6, characterizing the decision of the Prime Minister as follows:

The Premier's statement, stripped of its sophistry—

I recognize there the language of my right hon. friend.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: Good language.

Mr. LAPOINTE: The statement continues:

—stripped of its sophistry is merely an announcement of his determination to hang on—

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. LAPOINTE: I see that those words are sweet to my hon. friends on the other side—

—in defiance of a heavily adverse verdict from the people of Canada.

To cling to office under such circumstances is usurpation of power and contempt of the popular will.

The attitude of the leader of the opposition was supported with amplification by his followers both in the membership of the House and in the press, and we have been subjected to a campaign of recrimination, insincere criticism, and frequently violent vituperation. I rise to-day to defend the public honour of the right hon. the leader of the government, and to show that not only had he the right to do that, but that it was his supreme duty to do it. Any other attitude on his part would have been a breach of trust, an infringement of the rights of parliament.

My hon. friends opposite should take this seriously, because it is a serious matter. This House is the offspring of the popular will. It is the instrument chosen by the people to give effect to their will as to the selection of those who should be the executive and the government of this country. The mem-