

to be allowed to trifle for an interminable period with the vital interests of Canada and of the Empire? Is it good enough for the Prime Minister and his colleagues to say: We have not had time to attend to this vital matter? The people of this country are entitled to say to the Government: It is your business to make time. The question of defence, if there is a question of defence, is not a question that will wait. If there is a crisis in the affairs of the British Empire, as some of those gentlemen have vociferated repeatedly, who are these men that they should sit idle from day to day, from month to month, for fourteen months, and have no proposal as to what Canada shall do to meet that crisis?

I need not labour that point longer. The duty of the Government is self-evident. The course of this debate has shown just as evidently the reason why they have not placed such a proposal before the country. The reason is amply evident—because they have not been able to agree as to a policy. One section of them declares that the \$35,000,000 vote is a last and final payment. I am not misquoting the Postmaster General when I use those words. Another section suggests that this contribution is to be followed by others at intervals more or less distant. I am not misquoting either my hon. friend from Brantford (Mr. Cockshutt) or my hon. friend from Calgary (Mr. Bennett) when I ascribe that suggestion to both of them. Again it is suggested that the vote of \$35,000,000 now is to be followed at some time in the future by a revival of the policy of a Canadian navy. Here are three distinct propositions, all advocated by members of the Government or their supporters in this House. The evidence has been placed before the House and the country as to why this Government has not yet placed before the House and the country a definite proposition for Canada's participation in the naval defence of the Empire, because they have not been able to agree upon a policy.

If this was a trivial matter, I would not be able to carry my argument to its next point. But may I repeat that it is not a trivial matter, either in the amount of money involved in the Bill that is now before the House, or in connection with the interests that are affected? On the contrary, the amount of money is sufficient that a few years ago it would have staggered and alarmed the country; and the interests affected are the most vital interests that could be affected by any action or any failure of action on the part of this Government. Therefore, we have before us a proposal of the first magnitude in every particular, in which the Government of the day and its supporters are

unable to present a policy, because they are unable to agree upon a policy.

In this country of Canada we are supposed to have constitutional government. We are supposed to have majority rule. We believe in the rule of majority. We realize that the majority of Parliament has a right to rule under our constitution as long as it represents a majority of the people—and no longer. That is the most important feature of the constitution, which is known as the British constitution in all the self-governing dominions of the Empire. The constitution makes full provision for that, if at any time there shall be reason to believe or there shall be reason to doubt that the majority in Parliament represent the majority in the country, then a means is provided for the testing of the question and the bringing into play the rule of the majority by an appeal to the people. Am I stating something that is new or unknown? Is it not a fact that it is the exception rather than the rule, when a Parliament lives out its full term? It is the rule of Parliament that it does not live out its full term, that from time to time occasion arises which requires, in order that the majority of the people shall rule, that Parliament shall be dissolved and an appeal to the people made. I need not remind this House that when a question of vital importance first comes up for consideration, upon which there is not knowledge as to how the majority of the people view it, at such a time and on such an occasion it is considered right and proper and in accordance with the fundamental principles of the British constitution that the Parliament should be dissolved, and that the people should have the right of giving a verdict. Another occasion arises whenever the King and his advisers do not agree; the question at issue is left to the people by a dissolution of Parliament and a general election. There is another occasion and that is when the advisers do not agree amongst themselves. It is true that they have on this occasion agreed to a compromise policy; but on the part of both parties to that compromise it is a breach of faith with the electors who placed them where they are. Under those circumstances it is the business of a government in power to avoid an appeal to the people, if it is possible to do so by any trick or jugglery that they can call up. On the other hand it is just as much the right, and it is absolutely the duty of those, who believe that they represent the people, to see that the people get the opportunity to give their verdict. Canada is entitled to know what the Government's policy regarding Imperial naval defence is and if it is a reversal of the policy embodied in law by the previous Govern-

Mr. OLIVER.