

The Secretary of State has officially declared that the governor of a British dominion is bound to follow the advice of his ministers in respect to any question of internal politics. He has no discretion in the matter and must leave the responsibility with the group of politicians who are supposed to represent the people. The colony, in fact, is a sort of republic with the Prime Minister, for the time being, as its virtual president. The same doctrine was affirmed by Mr. Harcourt in the House of Commons when dealing with the relations between Lord Gladstone and General Botha in the South African Union.

The Tasmanian crisis turned on the question of the governor's right to grant or withhold a dissolution of parliament. This right is part of the royal prerogative which the governor is supposed to exercise as the representative of the sovereign. In this country, however, the royal prerogative in this matter has fallen into abeyance. If a Prime Minister, whether defeated in the House of Commons or not, advises the King to dissolve that advice is accepted.

There is a point I want my hon. friends opposite to notice. Hon. gentlemen opposite say that we were defeated. I have told them and they know that we were not defeated; one has only to look at the records of the Votes and Proceedings of this House to see what our position was. I will give the House a little later on the position as it is recorded there. But for the moment I want to point this out that even if, while we were in office we had been defeated, if we followed the British practice, after having carried on the government as long as we had carried it on under existing conditions, if we asked His Excellency to grant dissolution, His Excellency would have been obliged to grant dissolution even under those extreme circumstances. The article continues:

The responsibility is left with the minister who thought fit to appeal to the constituencies; and the wisdom of his action must be judged by the results. The issue is between him and the people, and the Sovereign does not intervene either to influence the verdict or to postpone the trial.

These are very significant words, very far-reaching words. They affect the whole foundation of constitutional government from one end to the other of this great and vast empire. That is what fills me with amazement at the position of hon. gentlemen opposite. They would dare at this time in the history of the British Empire to risk the possibility of a great constitutional crisis, of which no one can tell how far-reaching the effects may be, just because they are determined to proceed in an unconstitutional manner. It is not too late yet for them to retreat.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): Will the right hon. gentleman give the House the date of that article?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: This is as far back as 1914.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): The date might be of value for the record. It is July 17, 1914.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: My hon. friend has evidently consulted the same authority. The article goes on:

In the colonies a different practice has prevailed. The governor has been supposed to exercise his discretion in this and other matters. Dissolutions asked for by premiers have been frequently refused. Colonial parliaments are short lived and party majorities are narrow; and His Excellency may not deem it worth while to put a busy and scattered population to the expense of an election when the people will in any case, soon have an opportunity to express their opinion. In 1899 dissolutions were refused by the governors in no fewer than three of the states. In 1909 Mr. Earle, the Labour Premier, was defeated in the Tasmanian House of Assembly by a majority of six, and asked the Governor, Sir Harry Barron, to let him go to the country. The governor refused, and sent for the leader of the opposition, who was able to form a ministry with sufficient support in the House. In these and other cases "Downing-street" backed up its man on the spot and asserted the discretionary power of the governor.

All that, as my hon. friend will note, relates to a position affecting not a self-governing dominion, but these smaller states of a colonial status. What is the next paragraph?

It has now decided in the opposite sense.

That is in 1914 in the communication sent to the governor of Tasmania.

The old trouble has broken out in Tasmania again. The Liberal minister in Tasmania was defeated by a single vote, and the premier, Mr. Solomon, asked Sir William Ellison-Macartney, the Governor, to grant a dissolution. But the governor refused and called upon Mr. Earle, the Labour Leader, to form a ministry, annexing, however, to his request the condition that a general election should take place. Mr. Earle accepted under protest, and his objection was supported by the parliament which resolved, with only one dissentient vote, that the governor's demand was contrary to the principle of responsible government. The resolution was transmitted by the governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who has replied in the despatch which emphatically supports the position taken up by the Tasmanian premier and legislature. It is laid down that the governor ought to act upon the advice of his ministers in such a question as that of authorizing or prohibiting a dissolution of parliament, which is one of purely internal politics, and that he ought not to impose conditions upon them. In other words, it is the ministers, presumably representing the people, who are responsible for the "peace, order, and good government" of the colony, not the officer who represents the crown and the imperial cabinet. If this doctrine is maintained—as it probably will be—almost the last vestige of imperial control over the affairs of the self-governing colonies disappears. It is an emphatic recognition of the complete nationhood of the dominions, so far as regards their own domestic government. The governor remains, though it may not be long before he will be appointed on the recommendation of the local, rather than the home, cabinet. He is there to guard