

*Lake of Confidence Vote*

Mr. IRVINE: Two, sir.

Mr. PUTNAM: This resolution contemplates that vote number two would declare that vote number one, which would ordinarily constitute a defeat of the government, was really a defeat of the government. Is there a limit in his mind to the time when or the stage at which vote number two could be invoked?

Mr. IRVINE: I am not sure that I have caught that question. I am afraid I shall have to ask my hon. friend to repeat it.

Mr. PUTNAM: I am asking the hon. member, purely for my own satisfaction, this question: We will suppose that vote number one has taken place, wherein the government is outvoted. Under the proposal contained in my hon. friend's resolution, he has the right to follow that with vote number two, in which parliament would say categorically that vote number one was a defeat of the government—that is, a want of confidence vote. In other words, is there any limit to the time in which vote number two can be invoked against the government?

Mr. IRVINE: Do I understand the hon. member to ask whether my resolution fixes the precise number of days during which the government shall hold office in the event of its being voted out by an adverse vote?

Mr. PUTNAM: I certainly did not suggest any such foolish thing. I asked if there was any limit to the time or stage in our proceedings when parliament could say to the government: Though you were outvoted some time ago and have gone on doing business in good faith since, we are now going to say that that vote taken a week or ten days ago was a vote of want of confidence.

Mr. IRVINE: There is no necessity for any such thing. In fact, it would be foolish to have any stated time so far as the vote of no confidence is concerned. That could be moved at any time, even when there was not an issue under consideration. We might discover, for instance, that the government had run off with a hundred million dollars. In that case we would immediately vote that the government resign. That is all it means. The no-confidence vote need not necessarily have any connection with the other vote at all. A government might be defeated on a measure, but we would pay no attention to that. The government would carry on, and might be defeated on some other measure, but so long as parliament felt that they were carrying on the country's business fairly efficiently, they would go on.

[Mr. Putnam.]

Mr. PUTNAM: The resolution does not contemplate a specific vote declaring that the former vote showed a want of confidence in the government?

Mr. IRVINE: Not necessarily.

Mr. BUREAU: Then why the word "followed"?

Mr. PUTNAM: Does the hon. gentleman mean that a specific vote defeating the government is per se a want of confidence vote?

Mr. IRVINE: Does the hon. member mean under the present practice or under my resolution?

Mr. PUTNAM: Under the resolution.

Mr. IRVINE: This resolution simply says that the government shall continue to do the business of this country until parliament tells it not to. The defeat of a measure brought in by the government would have nothing to do with the administrative efficiency of the government, and the existence of the government would therefore be disassociated from the fate of the measure. But if the government showed inefficiency or dishonesty, or any other characteristic that did not meet with the approval of parliament, it could be voted out of power at any time, just as it could be under the 10 p.m. present practice. There is nothing complicated about that. It is not nearly as complicated as the British North America Act giving us our constitution.

Mr. PUTNAM: I do not want to take up the hon. member's time captiously, but I want to understand his purpose clearly. Am I to understand that if this resolution is put into effect in the most drastic way we can imagine, there will be no specific vote declaring that a former vote was a vote of want of confidence?

Mr. IRVINE: Why should you want that providing this resolution should be adopted as the practice of this parliament? The resolution plainly says:

That, in the opinion of this House, a defeat of a government measure should not be considered as a sufficient reason for the resignation of the government.

That is all there is to that part. The other part of the resolution means that the government may be voted out of office by parliament at any time.

Mr. EULER: That is not necessary. It is taken for granted.

Mr. IRVINE: Does the hon. member for Colchester (Mr. Putnam) understand the re-