

read to us yesterday, as a justification for the course he and his friends have taken. He says :

We are of the opinion that the Liberal-Conservative party ought to be represented by the strongest Government possible to be secured from its ranks, that the necessity therefor was never greater than under existing circumstances, and we believe that such a Government can be formed without delay.

Is that the reason the hon. gentleman retired? Was it because he wanted to have a competent Government that he and his colleagues withdrew from the Administration? Has he want of confidence in his own colleagues who retired with him, or want of confidence, at all events, in their capacity? I do not think so. The hon. gentleman himself, by this address, wishes the country to understand that if such men as those, who have retired with him, had control of public affairs, then the Government would be competently conducted. They are able, they are competent men—so they say—and all they require is a competent head. But, say these hon. gentlemen, although we are excellent material, the Government was vacant in the upper story. Now, in another paragraph, he says :

This we have repeatedly urged upon the Premier with the result that we found ourselves face to face with Parliament, having a Government with its numbers incomplete, and with no assurance that the present Premier could satisfactorily complete it.

Well, what is the position of the Government? There are two seats, I believe, vacant—one in the Cabinet and one outside. The Solicitor-General's position was not filled; neither was that of the late Minister of Agriculture. Well, that was not an extraordinary thing, and certainly not extraordinary in a Government by the Conservative party in this country. I remember many instances when seats in the Administration were vacant for a good while; and so far as I remember, there were still over thirteen members left in the Cabinet, so that there was abundance of material, whether it was material of the right sort or not. Let me point out this irrelevant reason assigned for resignation. That reason was just as good two months ago as it is to-day. It was just as good before Parliament was called as after the proclamation. Why did the hon. gentleman wait until Parliament was called before he discovered that the Administration was incomplete. Why did he assist in framing the Speech from the Throne and marking out a policy for the Administration? Why did he come down to this House and invite the attention of the House to the contents of the Speech from the Throne if he were not prepared to go on—if he thought that because there was no Solicitor-General and because one office in the Cabinet was vacant, that was a reason for his not continuing in the Government?

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell.)

Sir, let me call the hon. gentleman's attention to another matter of importance. Seats have been kept vacant in this House for some months. Writs, I believe, were issued, in some cases, some time ago, but the Government failed to appoint the returning officers, they failed to give the necessary instructions. They put impediments in the way of the election instead of discharging their duty. Thus the hon. gentlemen must have thought it was more important that an unnecessary office in the Administration should be filled than the people of a large constituency should be represented in this House. Then, look at the Senate. The hon. gentlemen know that there have been for a long period of time many seats vacant in that House. That is contrary to the spirit of the constitution. I suppose, from what the hon. gentleman has said, that he is in accord with the course taken with the authority of the Prime Minister in this regard. How is it that the hon. gentlemen assign as a reason a temporary vacancy in the Government, while these vacancies in the Senate and the House of Commons extending over a long period of time were not considered worthy of notice? Then, Sir, there are vacancies outside. The hon. gentleman will not pretend that offices have been created in this country producing charges upon the public revenue which he thinks altogether unnecessary. Why was the Collectorship of Customs of Montreal kept vacant? The hon. gentleman says: There is no Solicitor General, and I must retire from the Government. And yet, while there has been no Collector in Montreal for three years, the hon. gentleman did not think it worth while to retire on that account. Further, the hon. gentleman and his colleagues have withdrawn from the Government and the reasons for that withdrawal are all set out in the address which the hon. gentleman read to us yesterday. It was open to the hon. gentleman, if he was dissatisfied with the Prime Minister, to have informed him that they desired an interview with His Excellency and that they desired to inform His Excellency that they did not consider Sir Mackenzie Bowell qualified for the post of Prime Minister. This course was followed in the case of Lord Granville in the Pelham Administration, who was following a course in respect of foreign affairs with which his colleagues did not agree. Five of those colleagues waited upon the King and informed His Majesty that they entirely disapproved of the foreign policy of Lord Granville and asked his removal from office on that account; and, although that policy was one of which the King approved, and although Lord Granville was a personal friend of His Majesty, nevertheless His Majesty complied with the request of a majority of his advisers. And so, in this case, it was open to the hon. gentlemen who were dissatisfied with the Government here