

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I am pretty sure it would not have been.

Mr. CAHAN: I do not want to enter into a discussion with the hon. gentleman. But I give him credit for being the most optimistic man I ever came into contact with in public life, and the genial optimism he displays even to-night in the suggestion, that he may come back as Prime Minister by a double shuffle within a week or two, surpasses the reasonable and intelligent anticipations of others who are not equally as sanguine as himself. But coming down now to the question, the right hon. leader of the opposition last evening stated:

In being declined the right of dissolution I believe I was declined that right because His Excellency had the honest belief that some other member of this House could be found who as Prime Minister could carry on the business of government in this country in the way it should be carried on, befitting the dignity and honour of parliament, and which would therefore avoid the necessity of a general election.

There the right hon. member frankly admits that under the constitutional practice His Excellency the Governor General in the selection of an hon. member of this House, who could carry on the business of the government of this country and avoid the necessity of a dissolution and general election, would be acting within the constitutional practice; and, if the hon. member so selected were able to do so, he would entirely vindicate his selection by His Excellency the Governor General. The present leader of the opposition further says:

I believe that His Excellency the Governor General sincerely believed that the present Prime Minister would be able to carry on the government of this country in a manner befitting and in accordance with British traditions, in a manner which would accord with the recognized principles of responsible government; and believing that, His Excellency undoubtedly asked the present Prime Minister whether he was prepared to assume office on those conditions. Now if the right hon. gentleman can demonstrate to the country, if he has demonstrated to this House and this parliament, that he is able to do that, after what we have seen and are witnessing in this so-called ministry presented to us to-night, then I say that His Excellency's judgment in the matter has been sound and right, and there is no criticism to offer.

That is the statement he made last night, clearly and distinctly to this House and to the public of Canada. That was before some member on the other side, I do not know who, had had a night to cogitate upon the matter, and to concoct this singularly ludicrous resolution which has been presented here to-night by way of a vote of want of confidence in the existing government; but that the constitutional practice thus stated by the right

hon. leader of the opposition last evening is the constitutional practice in this country cannot I think be doubted. For instance, in this late work of Keith's, the edition of April 19, 1924, to which the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Garland) referred this afternoon, I find in the introduction, which undoubtedly is somewhat later than the writing of the text, he deals with the fact that in England there are now three recognized parties; and the fact that three parties exist and that at any time no one of those parties may have a complete majority in the House will tend to evolve possibly, and probably, a new constitutional practice. He says in dealing with this question:

The constitutional issue, therefore, has again been raised as to the position of the crown in regard to the dissolution of parliament. It has been suggested that the practice in the dominions—

Mind you, this is written in April, 1924.

—which empowers the representative of the crown to decline to grant a dissolution to a premier, provided that he is able to find a politician willing to carry on the government and to accept responsibility for the refusal, should be regarded as applicable to Great Britain.

There it is made clear that the practice, which in 1924 prevailed in the dominions of the empire, was to the effect that, provided His Excellency the Governor General was able to find a member of parliament willing to carry on the government and to accept responsibility for the refusal to dissolve parliament, His Excellency would be acting in accordance with recognized constitutional practice in calling upon such member to form a new ministry rather than to dissolve the House on the advice of the preceding prime minister. He says in effect: That now, in view of the fact that there are three parties in Great Britain, the question is mooted whether that same practice, which prevailed in 1924 in the dominions of the empire, should not now be accepted as also applicable to Great Britain, and as in the interests of the people of Great Britain. He further states:

The question presents considerable difficulty when treated in the abstract. It is, for instance, obvious that the crown could not constitutionally grant a prime minister, who had obtained one dissolution and had been defeated, a second dissolution of parliament if any other means of carrying on the government could be found.

That is stated by Mr. Keith to be the present constitutional practice in Great Britain, and how does it apply to the present conditions in Canada? In September, 1925, the then prime minister of the country, the present leader of the opposition, approached