

Business of the House

can look at the list of members and count every vote according to the places where they seat themselves in the house. But if any house of commons or legislative assembly reduces itself to a position where individual discretion, intelligence and conscience mean nothing, then there might just as well be no recorded vote at all, and the vote might just as well be taken from the printed sheet.

The fact is that members of this House of Commons and other legislative bodies in the country have demonstrated that measure of independence which is the hallmark of free parliaments. There is no reason on this or any other occasion to assume that merely because of the tag on which a member was elected he is simply to become a servile digit to be named by the leader of his group, without any respect for his own conscience, when some subject is before the house.

The practice is very well established, and on this occasion I think it would be well if I were to place before the house the opinion of a member whose virtues have been loudly extolled by a number of hon. members opposite as one who understands the real meaning of parliament, and of this parliament particularly. I would quote the words of the right hon. member for Glengarry (Mr. MacKenzie King). It is true that we have not always agreed on every subject; but in this instance surely I can offer to hon. members opposite no better advice than that of the man for whom they have shown such unreserved respect in these past few days and for whose opinion they have the highest regard.

Therefore I should like to read what the right hon. member for Glengarry said in 1921, as it is reported at page 151, volume I of *Hansard* for that year. These words, it seems to me, set forth the very core of the consideration that should be in our minds. I shall quote his words, and these will be his words until I have indicated that the quotation is ended:

We take the position that without the confidence of this house and of the country they are not entitled to introduce a bill or to spend a dollar; and unless my right hon. friend can show us some precedent for adjourning the debate on a motion of want of confidence in the government to take up another matter, we would be justified I think in adhering to the position which we have taken from the outset, namely that the government lacks the confidence of the country, and therefore is not entitled to proceed with any legislation.

There the quotation ends.

The mere fact that the want of confidence motion has not yet been moved varies in no way the effectiveness of this statement—because the only reason there is no want of confidence motion before the house is that this motion has been introduced before the debate has been resumed. The view put

[Mr. Drew.]

forth there by the right hon. gentleman is one in which I think all hon. members might well concur; because if for any reason members in the house do not support the government, then the government may well have committed itself to a course with which it had no right to proceed, unless that confidence has once been established.

There may of course be varying reasons. We would simply not recognize reality if we were to say that there could be no occasion upon which some emergency situation might arise where a motion of this kind might be called for, if the debate were to be unreasonably protracted. But no such situation arises now. The debate is going on next week, by decision of the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) and his colleagues. That being so, until there is any indication whatever that an emergency actually presents itself, and the debate is in fact proceeding next Friday, there is no reason whatever to support the motion. It should be opposed in principle in any event. But even without that, the motion is wholly unnecessary, and therefore it is opposed.

Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggart): Mr. Speaker, when the proposal was first made that the debate should be interrupted from today, my colleagues felt the request was one we could not approve. The government, however, has compromised to this extent, that next week the debate on the address will continue, and that at the end of next week we shall take up the matter of union with Newfoundland.

I think it is unfortunate that this debate must be interrupted, but my experience in the twelve years I have been here is that normally the debate on the address lasts anywhere from three to six weeks. I realize that there is great urgency in connection with the Newfoundland agreement, but that urgency arises because of a situation not in our own country or in our own parliament but in the British parliament. May I say that that is the reason why we shall support the amended resolution that has been introduced this afternoon. At the moment the British house is engaged in many important matters dealing not only with their own grave domestic situation but with the international situation as well. I think we owe it to them, if they require at least three weeks to deal with this matter, to see that they have ample time in which to consider this agreement, which according to newspaper reports will be opposed by some members of the opposition in the British House of Commons.

While we dislike these interruptions of the debate on the address, on this occasion we think that the government has a better reason