

out opposition and becoming law by the 1st of July, so that he could thereafter have the election of the Minister of the Interior.

I want to say a word about the position of the Minister of Public Works. The acting minister (Mr. Hyman), I regret to say, has just gone out. No man regrets the illness of the present minister—I refer to the Hon. Mr. James Sutherland—more than I do myself. He is a gentleman for whom I have always had and always shall have the very highest personal regard, and no one will more heartily welcome him back to health and to this House than I. But what are the facts of the case? It is generally understood, in fact a gentleman whom the minister himself has consulted, has stated that the Minister of Public Works has asked the First Minister to accept his resignation, but for some reason or other this resignation has not been accepted. That responsible position, which the constitution requires shall be held by a member having a seat in the parliament directly responsible to the people, has not been filled, and one of the largest spending departments of the public service is without a responsible head in this House to-day. I am not saying one word about the hon. member for London, the minister without portfolio (Mr. Hyman), a gentleman who I believe undoubtedly stands head and shoulders over his colleagues from that province. I am not saying one word about his fitness, and that is all the more reason why he should be made the responsible minister. He occupies a peculiar position. His position in the cabinet is simply that of a minister without portfolio. He is not responsible for any department, and has not appealed to the people for reelection after his appointment as minister. I am sure the First Minister will bear me out when I say that the position he now occupies is entirely unconstitutional. It is pointed out in Todd, page 483, volume 2, in reference to the case of Lord Russell, spoken of by the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden):

On March 9 the Earl of Derby took notice in the House of Lords of 'the very great inconvenience and injury to the public service' occasioned by the absence from the country and from his official duties of the Colonial Secretary—

It was only in February that Lord Russell went to Vienna.

—more especially as no Under Secretary had been yet appointed to represent the department in the House of Commons.

Earl Granville (the president of the council) replied, that for the present the Home Secretary (Sir George Grey) would also take charge of the Colonial Department, being 'formally and technically' competent, as a secretary of state, to control any branch of the secretariate.

As a matter of fact, Lord John Russell returned and resumed his seat on April 30.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES.

Although the Prime Minister was in his place, the minister who was both formally and technically responsible returned in less than two months, and that satisfied the House and the country. The case of the Minister of Public Works was entirely different. The member for London is not technically qualified. He may be formally qualified as a member of the Privy Council, but he is not technically qualified for the office of Minister of Public Works, and therefore I maintain that there should be no delay in accepting the resignation of the Minister of Public Works. Then the member for London, one of the most popular men in the country, will have an opportunity of proving whether or not the present cabinet has the confidence of the people of this Dominion, not only in regard to the Public Works Department, but in regard to their general conduct of other matters. The custom of the English constitution is that all important measures involving important principles, such as that involved in the Bill before the House, should be pronounced upon by the people before becoming law. The First Minister knows that this measure was not at all discussed before the electorate. No one dreamed that there were going to be the contentious matters in this Bill that have been found in it. Therefore I maintain that the duty of the Prime Minister is to hold this Bill off until the feeling of the country in regard to it can be tested in a general election. I maintain that there is only one of two courses open to him at the present time. One is to go to the country and test the feeling of the electors in a general election; another is to appoint a new Minister of the Interior and put him in the field in some riding in the Northwest and test the feeling of the country in that way. The portfolio of the Interior should not be held open a moment longer than is absolutely necessary.

Mr. T. S. SPROULE (East Grey). Mr. Speaker, I beg to say a few words on this question before the motion is disposed of. It seems to me that we are face to face with a very unusual state of things both in this House and in the country. We are confronted with what may fairly be regarded, under constitutional government, as a very grave crisis. Confederation is yet on its trial. It was adopted many years ago to overcome difficulties which experience had shown to exist in our previous form of government, and with the object of doing justice to every interest and every locality. The fathers of confederation wisely and carefully considered this constitution before it was adopted, for the purpose of endeavouring, as far as the experience of the national life would enable them to do up to that time, to avoid the troubles of the past and to provide a proper government for the future; and the principle they laid down was representation by population in the popular chamber—this