

was to a certain extent agitating the parliament and the people of this country. My right hon. friend then said :

My courage is not to make hasty promises and then to ignominiously break them. My courage is to speak slowly, but once I have spoken I will stand or fall by my words.

I mention that, because my right hon. friend though he may have shown a great deal of courage in his action with regard to this measure, does not at least seem to have combined foresight with strict regard for constitutional usage. It is beyond all doubt that this House is entitled to regard every measure brought down by the Prime Minister, or by any other member of the cabinet, as a government measure, which is the result of the collective wisdom of the cabinet. I need not cite authority for that, to those who are at all familiar with the usage as laid down by recognized constitutional authorities ; let me, however, quote two or three words from volume II of Todd on parliamentary government in England where it is thus laid down :

Except in the case of an admitted open question, it must be taken for granted that the whole cabinet have assented to the ministerial policy as officially presented or propounded by any minister acting or speaking on their behalf.

Words could not be plainer. We have the absolute right to regard the measure brought down by the Prime Minister on the 21st day of February last, as a measure in respect of which every member of the cabinet had been consulted, and which, whatever differences of opinion might originally have existed with regards to its terms, was in the end concurred in by all the members of the cabinet, and had the support of each of them. Now, it has turned out since the introduction of the measure, that the hon. member for Brandon (Mr. Sirton), until recently the Minister of the Interior, was not consulted about that measure at all. I do not know how it may be with regard to other members of the cabinet ; we have no information with respect to that. We do not know whether or not the Minister of Finance was consulted with regard to the clauses which did not meet with the approval of the Minister of the Interior, nor do we know to what extent, if any, the Minister of Finance was consulted with regard to the financial terms embodied in this measure. But we have this peculiar circumstance, at least, that the measure was brought down two or three days before the return of the Minister of the Interior. Naturally we would not be led to suppose that a measure of this importance, with the terms of which the Minister of the Interior is so intimately connected, would be brought down within two or three days of his return to Ottawa, without his having had an opportunity to become ac-

quainted with its terms. Nor is it to be supposed, in view of the fact that the Minister of Finance had sailed about a week before from Europe to this country, that legislation of so great importance as the financial clauses of this Bill, would be introduced into this House on the eve of his return, without his having any opportunity to advise with regard to them, or to give his colleagues the benefit of the wisdom and experience which of course he must possess after occupying for some eight or nine years the position which he now holds. Under these circumstances, I think we might well call for an explanation from the right hon. gentleman who leads the House as to why it was he brought down this measure without vouchsafing to the House the explanation that two members of his cabinet had not been consulted at all with regard to its provisions, and that, so far as they were concerned, this was not the act of the government.

But I need not go to Todd or to any other authority on parliamentary government in regard to this matter. This administration has laid down a rule, peculiar, as it is declared, to the form of government which we enjoy in this country. What was the position of affairs ? The Minister of the Interior represented in the cabinet the great west of Canada—represented more than any other member of the cabinet that portion of this country which is now being created into two new provinces. Further than that, owing to his experience of some eight years in the position of Minister of the Interior, he might be supposed to possess a more intimate knowledge of the needs and requirements of that country than any other member of the cabinet. And yet the Minister of the Interior was not consulted with regard to this measure, and that in the face of the most explicit declaration made by this administration no further back than the 14th of June, 1904, that he was the man above all others who should be consulted on this question. When Lord Dundonald was dismissed from his position as General Officer Commanding in this country, the government passed an Order in Council which was laid upon the table of the House, and in which the action of the administration in that regard was justified upon certain grounds ; and one of the reasons put forward by the administration for the interference by the Minister of Agriculture in a department with which otherwise he had no concern whatever, indeed, the only justification for that interference, was expressed in that Order in Council in these words :—

In the case of members of the cabinet, while all have an equal degree of responsibility in a constitutional sense, yet in the practical working out of responsible government, in a country of such vast extent as Canada, it is found necessary to attach special responsibility to