

Dissolution of Parliament

Mr. Diefenbaker: I took that medium of transportation which made it possible for me to go and return in the same day. The announcement I am about to make will, of course, occasion no surprise to hon. members, for events in this house—and I thought they were well indicated by the right hon. gentleman who just spoke—have been moving steadily and firmly toward it.

The present government is supported by 113 members out of a total of 265. Its position as a minority government has become intolerable. No other party or group in this house can possibly form a government; that I want to make clear. The only way in which the present situation can be effectively resolved is by the course I am about to announce. No hon. member will suggest that a situation in which a government can depend upon the support of only a minority of the members of this house is a satisfactory situation or one that could be expected to continue long. At the outset of the present session in October last—

Mr. Sinclair: Mr. Speaker, I should like to rise on a point of order.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Sinclair: I rise on a point of order, sir. We had thought that the Prime Minister would rise to ask the consent of the house to revert to motions. If he is not doing that, we would like to ask under what order of business he is now speaking at five minutes past six o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: At this time the house usually considers the business for the following day.

Mr. Sinclair: Mr. Speaker, no request was made by the Prime Minister to revert to motions.

Some hon. Members: Six o'clock.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I was saying, Mr. Speaker, that at the outset of the present session in October last, assurance was given by the then leader of the opposition (Mr. St. Laurent) that the government might count upon the official opposition not to place obstacles in the way of the government in seeking to carry out the program which was approved by the Canadian electorate on June 10, 1957.

Mr. Sinclair: Mr. Speaker, I rise again on this point of order.

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): This is interesting.

Mr. Sinclair: Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister is indicating the order of business for Monday he should do so, rather than

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make a political speech without asking for permission to revert to motions.

Mr. Speaker: I was in the chamber during the latter stages of the committee stage, and I am sure no hon. member wants to stand strictly on any point of order at this stage. If the Prime Minister is making an announcement with respect to the business of the house, I am sure hon. members would wish to hear him.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, we would have been very glad, of course, to have reverted to motions for the Prime Minister to make a statement. He has proceeded to make a statement, and I assume that the leaders of all parties in this house will be given an opportunity to reply to his statement.

Mr. Speaker: That is a question which I shall have to decide after the Prime Minister concludes his statement.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I just mentioned that at the beginning of the session the then leader of the opposition indicated that the government might count upon the official opposition not to place obstacles in the way of the government carrying out its mandate. The immediate items of the program of this government have now been carried into legislative effect.

Mr. Sinclair: What about the South Saskatchewan river dam?

Mr. Diefenbaker: The present Leader of the Opposition clearly indicated in his speech in this house on January 20 that the government can no longer expect any continuance of the course announced by his predecessor. Indeed, there have been many statements from opposition sources indicating quite clearly that the government would be defeated in the house as soon as the opposition could contrive it, and that they would welcome a general election.

On January 21, as recorded at page 3570 of *Hansard*, when the Minister of Finance was speaking about the lack of courage on the part of the opposition to challenge this government, the hon. member for Laurier said, "Bring it on," and the hon. member for Montmagny-L'Islet said, "Hold it". Indeed, on the previous day, January 20, as recorded at page 3524 of *Hansard*, I said when we have the authority to cut taxation we shall do so and the hon. member for Laurier said, "Why don't you find out whether or not you have it?"

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Sinclair: Is this the order of business for tomorrow? This is a speech.