

Mr. Stafford: How would you know?

Mr. Nielsen: Obviously, from the actions of the government, there are no experts on that side of the house.

I was asking whether it was an opposition trick, Mr. Speaker, that the government insisted on proceeding with this measure on Monday night. I was asking whether it was an opposition trick or whether it was by connivance of the opposition that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Hellyer) insisted on the vote and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) insisted on the vote or that we tricked the government whip into assuring the Minister of Finance he had sufficient members in the house. Really, the Prime Minister must believe the Canadian people are incredibly stupid to swallow that kind of nonsense.

At the same time the government accuses us of connivance and trickery they say the vote was a mistake; it was a miscalculation. It was a snap vote or it was a fluke. These are the same people who are levelling these accusations at us today.

Mr. Choquette: You were not supposed to be there last Monday. You have been absent for a year.

Mr. Nielsen: What arrogance.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Nielsen: Have we reached the stage of dictatorship where in the future only the government will determine when a vote will be a great of confidence vote? This is what that great constitutional authority, the Prime Minister, had to say in 1962:

Responsible government, which was not gained in Canada without bloodshed, is the foundation of our independence and our democracy in this country. What do we mean by responsible government? We mean that the Queen's ministers are responsible to the elected house of parliament. They have the right to remain in office only so long as they have the confidence and support of a majority of the elected representatives of the people.

● (4:00 p.m.)

This government lost that support and that confidence last Monday night. I quote the Prime Minister again:

In a parliament where no political party has a clear majority, this confidence and support cannot, of course, be taken for granted by the government... No government, however, has the right to remain in office unless it can command the support of a majority in the House of Commons.

Those are the Prime Minister's words, Mr. Speaker. He has now "pulled a Caouette". This arrogant government, this government

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that believes that the Liberal party rules by divine right, which is no change from the usual situation, now attempts to carry on government as though Monday night never happened at all. Because the Prime Minister is such an impeccable source, Mr. Speaker, I should like to quote him again. He said:

This is indefensible and unconstitutional behaviour on the part of one who talks so much about the rights of parliament and the sacredness of our parliamentary institutions.

It is all the more shocking, sir, because we are currently involved in vital constitutional considerations. Questions of great importance are being discussed. Yet we are confronted with the spectacle of a Prime Minister who has lost his mandate from the people and from parliament but is blithely insisting on continuing as though nothing has happened. In the same speech the Prime Minister had this to say:

I insist that nothing should be done in this parliament...until the question of confidence has been settled in the proper constitutional way. Unless that question is settled first, the right of parliament to control the executive will have ceased to mean anything.

All of those quotations, Mr. Speaker, are from a speech made by the Prime Minister at a testimonial dinner honouring Toronto and district Liberal members of parliament at the Royal York hotel in Toronto on September 18, 1962. What greater authority can I quote than that.

As to this sudden shift by the leader of the Cr ditistes, the action now taken by that party has, as one colleague has suggested to me, totally "discreditisted" that party. All I can say is that I compliment the Secretary of State for External Affairs on his most amazing powers of diplomacy. So great are those powers, sir, that in my view we should send him at once to Viet Nam.

We have been criticized very mildly for not quoting some precedents. I have some and I commend them to the consideration of the house. The first one I want to lay before the house is "Law of the Constitution" by a highly respected writer, A. V. Dicey. In his ninth edition, pages 418 and 419, the writer explains that our constitutional precepts are divided into statutory precepts and precepts of custom, usage or practice of the commons. At page 420 of his work the following statement appears:

A ministry which is outvoted in the House of Commons is in many cases bound to retire from office. A cabinet, when outvoted on any vital question, may appeal once to the country by means