

Alleged Lack of Government Leadership

to find in the first debate, shall we say in the resolution stage, that there is some disagreement and then suddenly it is pulled back from out of our grasp, to come back a week, ten days or two weeks later when we have to go over the whole thing again. This is just wasted time and confuses the issue.

It is not good enough, either, to say that the opposition parties have refused to cooperate and have insisted on blocking these procedures, because perhaps the procedure of harmonious and aggressive programming in such a house of minorities is a little different than it was when there were 208 members on the government side of the house. It is in this situation that I think the government have failed completely to recognize their responsibility and opportunity. Again I come back to the question of the minority situation in this house. The position of Canada today, as far as our party structure is concerned, is not that of a two-party system. It is a multi-party system and we are going to have to face it and understand it for quite a long time to come, simply because the two old line parties, no matter on what side of the house they sit, have played politics too long with the operations of our government. It is not enough for the Prime Minister to rise and speak on defence or any other topic and spend 95 per cent of his time tirading against the Leader of the Opposition. We need something positive and aggressive. Likewise, it is not the responsibility of the leader of the official opposition to rise and think he is accomplishing and fulfilling his purpose by simply returning that tirade to the Prime Minister. This is the very thing that is destroying the confidence of the Canadian people in a traditional two-party system. Let us just remember that the basis upon which we have operated for so long and so smugly does not necessarily reflect the over-all opinion of Canadians. It is here where we in this house, again, have failed to meet our responsibilities.

Now let us look objectively for a few moments at the situation in which we are placed. The easiest way out of this problem would be to have an election. As I see day after day what is happening here I almost reach the conclusion inside myself that this is the only way in which we can get out of the present situation. But then I study the situation, look at it and ask myself, would an election solve anything?

Some hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Thompson: I do not believe the people of Canada are today ready to make up their minds with sufficient unanimity to give us a majority government. I believe we would find ourselves just prolonging the dilemma

[Mr. Thompson.]

we are in and, while doing so, would again threaten the very foundations of our present economy and its orderly functioning. If we could only know what foreigners outside Canada are today saying about Canada as a result of the bungling over our defence problem, as a result of the lack of progress we have made in this house, perhaps some of us would be a little more determined to get on with the job that is before us instead of just thinking we can change things by having an election. My mother used to say to me when I was a boy, "You cannot get away from the devil just by running away from him".

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): The Leader of the Opposition tries.

Mr. Thompson: Therefore I think we must face up to the situation we are in and try to come up with a decision.

Mr. Byrne: Safe, again, for a week.

Mr. Thompson: We must try to come up with a decision that will prove to the people that we do have some sense of responsibility left.

Mr. Hellyer: You cannot get rid of the devil by holding on to his hand either.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, it is one thing to make remarks in this house and think we are pretty smart in making them; it is another thing to convince the people that we have any smartness left in us.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Thompson: Therefore as we consider the position we are in, in light of what an election at this time might bring about, we find we have two alternatives. We can either say to the government, "You have a chance to go ahead and do something. You have not taken that chance before", or else we can say to the government, "You have had sufficient opportunity, and because you have failed to fulfil your responsibility in that opportunity the only result can be an election at this time". In considering all that has happened during these last few tense days, we in this party continue to stand on our previous policy, which we stated clearly last Wednesday. That is, to go along with a reasonable discussion and debate on the supply motions that are yet to come and on the estimates which are yet to be brought forward, for the simple reason that this money has been spent, for the simple reason that we had nothing to do with the budget in the first place. Yes, and for the basic reason