

Motion Respecting House Vote

Mr. Speaker, should the Prime Minister tell us that he will present another measure in order to raise funds, I shall answer him that the Canadian people cannot afford to consider another way to be subject to taxation as advocated in the measure defeated last Monday night.

At this stage I say to the leader of the official opposition who contends strongly that the government exceeds its powers and does not respect tradition, that it was defeated and that Monday's vote is a non-confidence vote against the government, that the members of the Ralliement Cr ditiste who voted that evening against Bill No. C-193—as they had done on second reading and in committee—voted against the tax increase and not to show their lack of confidence in the government.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Caouette: Why, Mr. Speaker? I hear "Oh, oh" from the Conservative side. Precisely because we do not have any more confidence in the Conservative party than we have in the Liberal party. We would not want, at any price, to see the present Leader of the Opposition replace the Prime Minister, because he does not have a solution. It is all very well to tell the government: You are not doing your job, you are giving evidence of irresponsibility. It is all very well for the Conservative party to say that when it sits in the opposition, but I shall remind the Conservatives that when their party had 208 federal members in this house, it was at that time that Canada experienced its highest level of unemployment.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Caouette: When the leader of the official opposition says: the government asks us to ignore Monday's vote, it is not at all what I understand. The leader of the official opposition and myself probably did not attend the same school, but I do not understand the motion in that way at all. The motion does not say that we must repudiate the vote taken on Monday, and we agree that the government can introduce this motion. The other day, the leader of the New Democratic party stated that the government had the constitutional right to present its motion but that it did not have the moral right to do so.

Does that mean that the Canadian constitution is immoral? Does that mean, Mr. Speaker, that we must always follow traditions,

[Mr. Caouette.]

even if they are not solidly established? Must we always follow the same beaten track as in the last 100 or 200 years? Are we not able in 1968 to take our responsibilities ourselves?

On the one hand, Mr. Speaker, the opposition admits that the government has a right to present its motion. On the other hand, and according to tradition, as soon as a government is defeated, it must go before the electorate.

Reference has been made to events dating back to 1869, 1872, 1876 and 1926, when a government was defeated on a vote and did not call a general election anyway.

If it is true, Mr. Speaker, that on those occasions, according to tradition, the government did not resign and that the Macdonald government, for one, was defeated eleven times and did not resign, then the present government could very well not have moved a motion such as we have before us.

The opposition says that Monday's vote was a non-confidence vote. That is the position of the official opposition and the New Democratic party. On the other hand, the government says this was not a non-confidence vote. In these circumstances, what should we do, what should we say?

The government, through the Prime Minister, says: "We are going to introduce a motion in the house in order to determine whether or not you have confidence in the government".

If the motion asked: Do you have confidence in the government, our group would vote directly and completely against the government. We do not have confidence in the government, and we want them to know it.

However, that is not the text of the motion. It says, and I quote:

That this house does not regard its vote on February 19th...as a vote of non-confidence in the government.

It is a vote of non-confidence with regard to the income tax increase, and I have no sympathy for the government. But I want it to be clearly understood that I do not have any sympathy for the Conservatives either, nor for the New Democratic party.

I sympathize with the Canadian people who witness, at the present time, a political acrobatic game masterminded by the official opposition that refused on Wednesday afternoon to discuss that motion in which a vote could probably have been taken then. But no, the official opposition stood firm on the 48-hour notice, so that yesterday and the day