

Motion Respecting House Vote

conference and our experience last week show the value of speaking directly to the people instead of speaking only to each other in this chamber. I express the hope that as a result of last week's experience arrangements will now definitely be made to admit television cameras into the chamber, instead of having members rushing to the television cameras outside. It seems to me it is time we adjusted ourselves to this new information medium and made the necessary arrangements.

One point which struck me most forcefully all through last week is that we have further evidence of the credibility gap which some political leaders create in the public mind about politics and politicians. The Prime Minister had some cogent and simple, human reasons for refusing to accept last Monday night's decision. Though those reasons cannot influence my vote, I had sympathy for the right hon. gentleman. His reasons were understandable and they were obvious. The Prime Minister could not resign and ask one of his colleagues to lead the government because a number of them are candidates for the succession, and it would have been difficult for him to make a choice.

Mr. Horner (Acadia): He could pick a man who is not a candidate.

Mr. Lewis: The right hon. gentleman did not want to dissolve parliament and enter upon an election campaign, and I understand that. Having announced his retirement, it was impossible for him to contemplate leading his party in another election campaign. From his point of view, from his party's point of view and, he might have added, from the country's point of view it would be more desirable for his successor to announce the election and lead the party in the campaign.

These were simple, human reasons that the Prime Minister had, and I think they were the real reasons for his refusal to accept Monday night's decision. Then why not state that? Why not be frank with parliament and the Canadian people? Why resort to distortions and false accusations about plots and trickery?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lewis: I was saddened to see an admirably decent human being like our Prime Minister, who at times can be disarmingly frank, accept the political ethics of some of his colleagues who think a shovelful of sand in the eyes is better and more useful than a

barrel of honest facts. I think this kind of approach to political discussion and debate has undermined the credibility of parliament and politicians in this country.

I emphasize, in a speech which will not be too long, that as our leader said last Friday our vote on the previous Monday was not only a vote against the unfair increase in taxes on wage and salary earners but also a vote of non-confidence in the economic and fiscal policies of this government. We believe the government's economic policies are doing harm to Canada now, and that they threaten to be ruinous in the next year or so. We shall vote against this motion because we have no more confidence in the economic policies of this government today than we had a week ago.

• (3:00 p.m.)

We fought the budget and the economic policies behind it from the first moment, as hon. members know. I happened to be the first speaker in that debate on behalf of our party and I indicated, as did others who followed me, that we believed the mini-budget to be unnecessary, to be undesirable, to be based on wrong policies and wrong objectives, and that in particular the 5 per cent surcharge on individual taxes was ill conceived and bound to increase the inequity of a tax system which the Carter commission had already found to be inequitable.

In his lamentably and pathetically weak defence last Friday the Minister of Finance almost admitted that he really did not know quite what he was doing. We heard him say at one moment that this country had never known such prosperity as we had enjoyed in the last few years and were experiencing even now, while in the next he told us that the economy and the financial system of the country were in such jeopardy that we could not even afford to hold an election at this time without upsetting the apple cart.

He said in the course of his pathetically weak defence last Friday that the government did not intend to use the money collected through extra taxes on individuals for the purpose my leader had indicated. Despite what he said the fact remains that the proposed bill would have collected \$185 million from the pockets of individual taxpayers, and would have immediately paid back two thirds of it to corporations by returning the refundable tax, \$105 million in the first year and \$139 million the next. We thought it was unfair, undesirable and anti-social to take money from the pockets of the ordinary wage