

*Motion Respecting House Vote*

I want to ask what is the position of the 100 odd Liberals on this side of the house who are not in the cabinet. If they are not members of the government, why bring them back here to vote on questions of confidence and similar matters? Why cannot the government handle these things by themselves—they seem to be able to do everything?

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Cowan:** I wrote a letter to the Prime Minister on Thursday, February 22, and I delivered it to his office myself. Perhaps I might put it on record at this point.

For some years now I have been arguing that Canada does not enjoy government by its representatives but is the victim of cabinet government. This, of course, denotes the distinct difference between the members of the cabinet and the men and women who have been elected to the House of Commons by their electors with the idea that they would be part of the government of Canada.

When I was asked to run on the Liberal ticket in 1962, I was asked if I would help overthrow the Diefenbaker government. I wasn't asked if I would help to overthrow the Diefenbaker cabinet. When I was renominated by the Liberal party in 1963, it was with the firm intention on the part of the Liberals of York-Humber to overthrow the Diefenbaker government—not the Diefenbaker cabinet. I ran in 1962 and 1963, along with you, without anyone knowing who would be in the Pearson cabinet if the Liberals achieved government status. It did not take me long to learn after 1963 that a private Liberal member of parliament amounts to nothing in the eyes of a cabinet with overweening conceit.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Cowan:** My letter continued:

In the *Globe and Mail* of this morning, February 22, 1968, there is reference in the fourth column on page 8 to your comment that Mr. Stanfield had suggested that the Prime Minister might turn the government over to another Liberal. You are reported as having added that any member of the government would make a good Prime Minister. I note the distinction between what Mr. Stanfield is reported to have said, he used the word "Liberal", and what you are reported to have remarked, you used the word "government". Then some reporter asked you if even Liberal M.P. Ralph Cowan would make a good Prime Minister. You are then quoted by the *Globe and Mail* as having said "He is not a member of the government".

On behalf of those hundred odd Liberal members of parliament who are not members of the cabinet, would you be kind enough to advise us what our status is? There are Liberal voters throughout Canada who think that Liberal members of parliament are members of a Liberal government. If I am not a member of the Liberal government of the day, who or what am I? I personally could not care less what you have to say about me, but I would like to be able to tell the other hundred odd Liberal members of parliament who are not in the cabinet, just what their status is in your eyes.

[Mr. Cowan.]

I am holding in my hand one of the weekly calls to caucus. No doubt you like the wording, "A meeting of the supporters of the government will be held etc., etc." Every time I get one of these I wonder what we private Liberal members are, since it is evident from the call we are not considered members of the government.

Now that the Canadian public has your assurance that I am not a member of the government, you have no idea how free I feel at this time.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Cowan:** I then told the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire) that I would second his amendment; he had asked me once or twice whether I would do that. I felt quite free to do so and I did so in order that he might talk on his amendment.

In this connection I should like to quote some references and comments with regard to private Liberal members of this house who were absent. I am sorry to say some of them are hesitant to speak up; that is not a shortcoming on my part, I am told. I have here a copy of the *Toronto Evening Telegram* of last night, Monday, February 26, and on the front page I read:

Prime Minister Pearson admitted on national television last night that the Liberals blundered in the tax bill defeat last Monday. "Of course they blundered—"

Now I was asked to be one of the members of the Pearson team in 1962 and 1963 and 1965. It is some team, when the captain says "they blundered". Where was the captain? As far as we can find out, he was not even paired.

"Of course they blundered and when a Government has 129 members who could vote for it and could muster only 82 there is a blunder. I'm not trying to excuse that," he said. "I knew this was a possibility. I didn't expect to end my days in peace.

"I was very angry—"

Well, my second daughter lived in Jamaica for two years after her marriage and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it is a very pleasant place in which to be angry with anybody. The beauty of it is that there is such a great distance between here and there that one is not aware of the anger until some time after it has worn off.

Here is another quotation from page 4 of the same newspaper:

"I was shocked and enraged," Mr. Pearson said. "I was directing my anger toward myself for being away... to our caucus... the members who were not there."

Well, I was not there, and if anyone has been directing any anger to me I am not