

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope the hon. gentleman will not accept the invitation of the Prime Minister. I trust that the debate will proceed on traditional lines.

Mr. Trudeau: I think the time has come for me to draw my remarks to a conclusion.

An hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: I thank the hon. gentleman for his applause, but I have a few more minutes in which I can talk and then he can applaud for longer.

The essence is that we do accept the responsibility of minority government. We realize that the verdict of the electorate was to the effect that no party was given an absolute mandate to govern alone. We believe that much can be achieved by a minority parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: I would be less than candid if I said I would not have preferred a somewhat different verdict. But the people of Canada did express their views in the election. They sent us here as we are, no party having an absolute majority. Nevertheless, they did send us here with instructions to act as a legislative body, for the government to formulate positions and policy, and bring forward bills, for the opposition to question them and debate, but also to produce. We were sent here to ensure that Canada would have a strong government, that Canada would have a government able to govern, a legislative body able to produce. And I think we must follow the rules of the game as they were laid out by the Canadian people.

Some things for us will be questions of confidence. Some things would mean the demise of the government. If, for instance, there should be a clear vote of no confidence in the government, if the government should be defeated on fundamentals, on basic principles—and I do not mind repeating, Mr. Speaker, that the Official Languages Act and its application to the public service of Canada is an example of such an area—we shall go to the people. If the opposition wish to defeat us on such a question and on other fundamental questions, they will have that opportunity. But I hasten to add that other questions, if they go against us, will not be interpreted by the government as a defeat of the government. We shall accept amendments—

An hon. Member: You make the rules.

Mr. Trudeau: The hon. member said we are making the rules. Let me remind him that even when we had a majority government we did not feel obliged to resign because some of our legislation—I am thinking of the national marketing act legislation—which was only passed after years of debate—

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): How about the tax measure?

Mr. Trudeau: Other measures, such as the grain stabilization bill, were withdrawn by the government because they failed to obtain passage. But we did not consider that to be a cause for resignation or for going to the people.

The Address—Mr. Trudeau

The logic of the government's position is not one of our making. It is one which follows from the result of the election. I know the temptation will be great, when the government accepts any modification of its priorities or its legislation, to say that the government is clinging to power. But if we pursue this logic further, I take it the same reasoning would apply also if we were to give our place to the Conservative opposition and if they were to form a government. Either they, too, would have to act as a minority government or else they would be obliged to ask for the dissolution of the House. So, it would seem to me that the logic which we accept is that which was given to us by the Canadian people when they voted on October 30. If it is an election that is desired, if we wish to reject that verdict of the Canadian people, we should say so clearly. That is not our position. It is our position to accept the responsibilities of governing, to try to place before the House of Commons a program which will as best as possible seek to respond to the lessons we learned in the election and to the priorities as we perceive them as a result of that vote.

The history behind our decision is a long-standing one. I have some notes here which I compiled with the help of Senator Forsey. I have an article by Eugene Forsey, as he then was, published in the month of August, 1963 in the *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*. It is interesting to read in that article and others that Sir John A. Macdonald remained in office despite several defeats between 1867 and 1873, sometimes on some very major issues. And if any precedents were needed by my friends in the New Democratic Party, I would suggest the precedent by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: Find a better one!

• (1730)

Mr. Trudeau: The minority Labour government of 1924 announced that it would consider decisive, defeats on direct votes of no confidence by the responsible leader of any party but it would not consider decisive, defeats on any other motions unless they went to the roots of the government's policies. There is even a precedent for my hon. friends on this side, taken from Mr. Gladstone's government of 1894 when he was actually defeated on an amendment to the address, which was passed by a snap vote, and he neither resigned nor asked for dissolution.

I do not think that anyone should be under any misapprehension: this government is not going to cling to office for the sake of clinging to office, swallowing everything and anything so long as it is still permitted to occupy the treasury benches. But we are not going to give up simply because we are defeated on some motion or bill, or some part of a bill or some amendment unless we feel that that defeat goes to the roots of our policy.

We want to see this parliament work. We want to see it work for the good of the country. We want to see it work under the leadership that we are prepared to give it. We are not going to abdicate our responsibilities or to bring this parliament to a premature end just because this House, in the exercise of its judgment, defeats us on some