

Motion Respecting House Vote

Mr. Sharp: All they want is to have this parliament, which was elected less than two and a half years ago, go about its business and deal with the urgent matters before it. The Leader of the Opposition did speak at considerable length about the problems facing the country. But what did he propose to do about those problems, Mr. Speaker? He proposed either to paralyse parliament or to call an election. They were the two practical alternatives that he put before us, unless, of course, he wanted to suggest that he himself wanted to be prime minister. He was not very enthusiastic about it; he was rather modestly reluctant. In any event I do not think that this would add greatly to the stability of government under the present circumstances. I suggest that the Leader of the Opposition would be better employed carrying on his job as Leader of the Opposition for a little longer. As he went on he might get to like it and would not want to change.

• (3:40 p.m.)

Mr. Starr: You hope.

Mr. Sharp: There are serious problems facing this country, problems of an unprecedented character.

An hon. Member: You made them.

Mr. Sharp: They have arisen for reasons which are mostly beyond the control of the parliament of this country.

Since becoming Minister of Finance I have never hesitated to lay before this house and before the people of this country the nature of the problems that face us. I have done that clearly; indeed, I have been criticized for being so frank. Nor do I think—and I want to make this clear—that the measures the government has proposed have invariably been right. In this very complex world you cannot always be right; you can only hope to be right most of the time.

An hon. Member: What about Monday night?

Mr. Starr: That only applies to the minister, I suppose.

An hon. Member: What about the President of the Privy Council?

Mr. Sharp: And I make no apologies.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Starr: I thought the minister was supposed to be an improvement over the previous finance minister.

Mr. Sharp: I make no apology whatever for having, during the time I have been Minister of Finance, altered the direction of our financial and economic policy. Had I hesitated to do so I could have been open to censure. Our circumstances have been changing rapidly. They will change rapidly and as long as I am Minister of Finance I shall try to fit our policies to those circumstances.

An hon. Member: From day to day.

Mr. Sharp: As I listened to the leader of the N.D.P. I came to envy him. I envied his self-assurance. It is quite clear that he knows he has all the answers. Clearly he knows that invariably he is right. He spoke with that self-assurance that has been so pronounced in his demeanour in this house. As I say, I envy him. It must be very pleasant to be happy with oneself and to know that one knows the answers.

An hon. Member: Boy, oh boy.

Mr. Sharp: It must be pleasant to go on in this comfortable fashion. And today we had a magnificent example of that supreme self-confidence, a self-confidence that was so supremely unwarranted.

The hon. gentleman expressed his great concern about inflation, but how does he want to deal with it? I listened very carefully to the remedies he put forward and he suggested that we should deal with inflation by following inflationary policies. We should spend more and tax less. That was the remedy he put forward, apparently as the result of that self-assurance that goes with his economic doctrines.

Mr. Graffey: Some think this might be a time for humility.

Mr. Sharp: It is this kind of talk that helps to undermine confidence. Of course, it may be that the hon. gentleman never expects to be in office and sees no harm in being so completely irresponsible. He said among other things, for example, that Bill C-193 would impose a tax on individuals in order to repay the refundable tax to corporations. Surely the hon. gentleman knows that such a statement is inaccurate.

Mr. Douglas: Not at all.

Mr. Sharp: Yet he persists in repeating the misstatement as if it were the gospel truth. Perhaps that is a carryover from the years when he was a minister of the gospel and not a member of parliament.