

*Motion Respecting House Vote*

other side of the house. I remembered the other debates here and I knew the sacrifices which they involved, because more than one member suffered seriously in health, and I think some premature deaths occurred as a result of that struggle in 1956.

We kept up the struggle. It was not settled in one, two or three days, and we were not alarmed at the thought that the vote was a foregone conclusion. What bothered me so much last week—and I will not go into all the details—is that it was said the people of Canada were informed, that they know everything about it. They made their decision. We are told “Stop the debate. Don’t filibuster. Cease speaking”.

● (9:40 p.m.)

One of the things that has depressed me more in recent years has been the continual attack made on this institution. It is coming now. Friends of ours are saying, “What are you doing in parliament? Why are you talking so much? Why don’t you get on with the business? The vote is a foregone conclusion, get it over with”. I said over the air tonight on one of these television broadcasts on this subject of attacking parliament, “The only thing I can say to the people who are doing that is, God forgive you, for you know not what you do.” I said, too, that in my opinion subversive forces are operating in this country to destroy this parliament. When this parliament is destroyed, your freedom is lost and my freedom is gone. Where else can you have freedom, unless it is in this institution which is the heart, the soul, the centre of the freedom of our country?

Now, people say, you are going to plunge the country into an election. You would think plunging into an election was like jumping into ice cold water. They speak as if this were something terrible. In the United States, they have an election every two years, and perhaps there is some complaint about that. We do not have elections that often. Municipal elections are held every year. Is that wrong, having an election every year? Provincial elections are held every three or four years. About 99 per cent of the voters in this country do not spend more than 15 minutes to one hour during an election campaign to cast their votes. I voted in a provincial election, not the latest one but the one before that. I happened to know the candidate and I respected him. During that election campaign that lasted five weeks, I turned off the radio whenever speeches were made; I did not look at television; I threw the literature into the

waste basket as it came to the house; I did not look at the ads in the newspapers; I did not attend a single meeting, and then it took me 15 minutes to walk from my home to the voting place and cast my ballot. I knew the issues and I knew the man and I had confidence in him. I tell you that experience is repeated by millions of people during any general election.

There is no plunging into an election and running scared. I am not advocating an election now. I do not think it is necessary. I believe this issue can be decided in an entirely different way. We are deadlocked here in the house. This motion will do damage to parliament, to our free institutions, unless I am wrong and unless this evidence I have given to you is wrong. Unless most members on this side of the house are wrong, that will be the result.

Now then, what can we do to have the motion withdrawn? You say, we cannot have a filibuster. People will say it is awful and you must not do this talking; get on with the business. We are protecting the freedom of this institution, the rights of parliament and the freedom of our citizens. Our only method is debate in this House of Commons. What are we to do—get placards and go down to 24 Sussex street and say, “Dear Mr. Pearson, please remove this motion”? We are not going to indulge in fisticuffs. We do not want civil strife. The parliament exists for the very purpose of conducting debate in a reasonable fashion under fair rules. In my experience, if debate seizes upon the main issue you get clearly defined thoughts and at some stage something has to happen. During the defence production debate something happened. The statesman, Mr. St. Laurent, solved that problem.

The great conciliator, the world statesman, the man who can negotiate at the United Nations, in the commonwealth with any known nation and reach a settlement, will not negotiate with Canadian citizens. The hero abroad has become the tyrant at home. Outside the country he uses the methods of conciliation; but here the bulldozer, to ride roughshod over his fellow citizens and destroy this institution. Does this Prime Minister of ours want to go down in history as the only Prime Minister in Canada to strike at the roots of this institution? There are millions of people who would like to honour him in his role as world statesman, but what are they to think now?