

*Income Tax Act*

every one of us to preserve this institution, and its rights, duties and privileges, unimpaired for future generations. It is doubly important for a minister of the crown to maintain this institution unimpaired. I can only say that when a minister of finance ignores the elected representatives of the people of this country and does not reveal to them first those matters he ought to reveal to them, he and his government are acting most irresponsibly. I hope government supporters will be the first to tell him that is so.

I am taking part in this debate because the question of what is responsible government has now become crystallized as it never has been in any previous debate. Never before has the question of responsible government been so prominent in our minds. I touched on this matter on Monday, February 26. That was after the Prime Minister had made his suggestion. After that the Minister of Justice spoke. That speech, coupled with the actions of the Minister of Finance, shows that the Liberal party and this government deny the concept of responsible government.

The entire question began to be raised in the Prime Minister's statement. In so many words he said that the question of confidence with regard to a major government tax measure only arose because the government was defeated. He denied that inherent in any major tax proposal by the government is a question of confidence, asserting, instead that the defeat had raised that question of confidence. I submit that no government has the right to make that assertion since it negates the principle of responsible government we espouse and which we hope will continue to exist for a long time.

After the Prime Minister's statement I expanded on his ideas and took them to their logical and ridiculous extreme. I said that if the Prime Minister's assertion was correct he had found a method to perpetuate his party in office because it could never be voted out. Even as I was advancing my argument it sounded ridiculous to me; yet it was taken up by the Minister of Justice. Answering a question of mine he said that the government has the right to say whether a question of confidence exists and it has the right to say that before or after a vote is taken. Is there any truth in this assertion? No one will deny that on some minor matter which the government considers important it may say there is a question of confidence; in other words, if the proposal does not carry the government will consider itself defeated.

It must be remembered that the Prime Minister is the adviser to His Excellency the Governor General. The Prime Minister has the right to call an election when he wishes to. He need not be defeated before calling an election because he has the power to do so. On defeat on a minor matter which the government deems to be a question of confidence, naturally it would go to the country.

The foregoing argument does not mean that the government has the right to say that on major questions which have always been matters of confidence. The government cannot do that. A recognition of what constitutes a matter of confidence is the cornerstone of the effective working of responsible government under the British parliamentary system. These remarks apply to Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and others. Inherent in the workings of the British parliamentary system is the acknowledgment that any major money bill involves a question of confidence. Notwithstanding that, the Liberal government attempts to say that major money bills are not questions of confidence and that a question of confidence shall arise only when it says it shall, either before or after a vote. We deny that any government has the right to say that a question of confidence is not inherent in any major measure. We deny that this government has the right to say that it can decide if a matter involves confidence after a vote defeating that measure has been taken.

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

**Mr. Nugent:** Not only does this party deny that the Liberal party and the government have the right to say that but we reject it as a policy of this party. It is the policy of this party that a government must accept the responsibility of the inherent question of confidence that exists in every major item of legislation which will have a substantial effect on the country. This is not a case of opting out but of accepting responsibility. The Liberal party is trying to say: We have the right to deny our responsibilities in order to ensure that we stay here forever to enjoy power.

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

**Mr. Nugent:** Now the Minister of Finance says that the present resolution involves a question of confidence. As my leader said the other day, what is the difference between the government's current proposals and those that were defeated? If there is any difference