

*Excise Tax Act Amendment*

side of the house to rise and tell hon. members that he supports what the Minister of Finance has done, that he condones his methods and will support his measure, and to give his reasons for doing so. I challenge every hon. member sitting to your right.

Mr. CLEAVER: If my hon. friend will sit down I will gladly accept the challenge.

Mr. FLEMING: Very well. The hon. member for Halton has just indicated that he is coming to the rescue of the Minister of Finance. Very well, Mr. Chairman; we will listen with great interest to what the hon. member for Halton may say. We will ask him to say how he squares the action of the minister with the fact that parliament was not in session.

Mr. ABBOTT: He can make his own speech.

Mr. FLEMING: I thank the Minister of Finance for his assistance, but I assure him I do not need it. I am not calling upon him for help. We will wish to hear from the hon. member for Halton and all other hon. members opposite what they have to say as to the right of any government to take money out of the pockets of their constituents without the matter ever coming before parliament.

Yes, Mr. Chairman, I hope that before this debate concludes we shall hear an opinion expressed on this matter by the hon. member for Quebec South, an hon. gentleman who, with some right and justification, still calls himself a liberal. I hope we shall hear also what the hon. member for Temiscouata has to say on this measure.

Mr. POULIOT: I will say it right away.

Mr. FLEMING: The hon. member has spoken eloquently in this house in asserting the rights of parliament against the inroads made upon those rights by the government. Let us hear any hon. members opposite who still call themselves liberals. Let them say, "We condone this action. Our constituents will approve it. Our constituents do not mind having the Minister of Finance dip his hand into their pockets and take out money with no authority from parliament." Let such hon. members say they approve these methods and condone what has been done, and are prepared to put their political conscience in the keeping of the Minister of Finance on this issue.

Mr. POULIOT: I am ready to start now.

Mr. FLEMING: If you condone what has been done here, Mr. Chairman—

Some hon. MEMBERS: Give him a chance.

[Mr. Fleming.]

Mr. POULIOT: Don't provoke me; I am ready to start now.

Mr. FLEMING: I hope all hon. members yonder who call themselves liberals will have plenty of opportunity to speak on this measure before this debate is concluded. As far as I am concerned, in concluding what I have to say, I wish to state that if this condonation is given by hon. members opposite, then we might as well say good-bye to the rule of law, to the supremacy of parliament over the executive, to the rule by constitutional methods and procedures that has been followed in this parliament in times past and has been the rule among all, in whatever part of the world they live, who derive their constitutional rights from Magna Carta, the Petition of Right and the Bill of Rights.

Mr. CLEAVER: Mr. Chairman, I want to assure my hon. friend who has just taken his seat, as well as every other member of this committee, that I cherish my personal rights under our constitution just as much as anyone in this country. But I want to say also that I have never knowingly hidden behind the constitution to attack a measure that I cannot attack on its merits. I think this committee well remembers a speech made by the leader of the opposition when we were called together on December 5; and I should like to know right now who is the leader of the Progressive Conservative party in this house. I am serious in that; I am going to read chapter and verse, and I should like to know who is leading that party here.

Mr. FLEMING: John Bracken is leading it, and you know it.

Mr. CLEAVER: We have listened to a regular barrage of criticisms tonight, and I have patiently waited for a chance to say a word or two now, at ten minutes to eleven. There was no opportunity before to say a word to remind hon. members of what happened so recently. I am just wondering why these wonderful defenders of the constitution should suddenly burst into bloom at this late stage, four months after the event, and why they should suddenly develop this constitutional mania about this measure.

Mr. SMITH (Calgary West): Will the hon. member permit a question?

Some hon. MEMBERS: No.

Mr. CLEAVER: I will have a word for my hon. friend a little later on, about the pig bristles which were his contribution in the early stages.

Mr. SMITH (Calgary West): Will you permit a question?