

Motion Respecting House Vote

Mr. McIntosh: The ordinary, reasonable man on the street, that is the Canadian public, concludes that the government or cabinet must either resign or request dissolution from the Governor General.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. McIntosh: This editorialist further states that in his opinion the motion now before the house is a contravention of the house rules, and completes his editorial with these words:

The only answer is dissolution, and the sooner the better.

I paraphrase my leader's remarks of the other day in the house, and say that this government has no right to put any business before the house, including a motion of confidence. It was defeated on a bill to raise taxes, a fundamental part of the government's program. This was a defeat clearly involving a loss of confidence of the house. The constitutional practice must be respected. It is fundamental to our constitution that the loss of such a fundamental vote of confidence involves resignation or a recommendation for dissolution.

The ordinary man on the street does not believe that the defeat of the government on a budget tax measure, moved by the Minister of Finance, can be anything but a convincing show of lack of confidence in the government by his representatives in parliament. Related to this issue, and clearly understood by the Canadian public, is the government's extravagance, so clearly shown by the Auditor General's report and the recent estimates. They show a sharp increase in most government spending programs. We now have serious inflation, astronomical interest rates, tight money and growing unemployment. As serious as these matters are, they are now exceeded by the political crisis facing parliament, because the supremacy of parliament is what is at stake; Canadian individual freedom is in jeopardy. An editorial in the *Toronto Telegram* of February 21 states in part:

The government is now badly split between men of conscience and those who would cling to office by any possible means or device.

The editorial also states that the Prime Minister is taking advice from those of his colleagues who would cling to the remnants of power no matter what the cost. The Prime Minister's determination to resort to these tactics puts the responsibility on members of parliament to uphold the institution to which they were elected. If the government is

[Mr. Crouse.]

upheld, then parliament becomes nothing more than a rubber stamp.

If the house does not have full and final control over money bills, it has full and final control over nothing. The members of this house cannot be asked to play the part of a scapegoat to assume blame for the government's mistakes. I am quite confident that the people I represent in the constituency of Swift Current-Maple Creek would be bitterly disappointed if they thought they had elected as a member, from any party, one whose only obligation to them was to act as a scapegoat or a rubber stamp. If there was any idea that such was the function of a member of parliament, I know the party which I support would have had a different candidate.

Such action to my mind completely destroys our democratic process. The whole process behind our form of government is that parliament has ways and means to safeguard the people against the executive branch, who may think it desirable to rule in a dictatorial manner. This is what they are trying to do, rule in a dictatorial manner. It is our duty as members of parliament, I say again, to protect the people against such a process. Winston Churchill once said:

Democracy is the worst form of government ever devised by man—except all others.

It is the best we have, and we must protect it. Asking the house to ignore Monday's vote makes a mockery of the House of Commons. Ignoring the vote strikes at the very heart and essence of constitutional democracy and responsible government. I can understand the attitude of the Prime Minister and the government in attempting to get around the decisive vote against them on Monday evening. They are so desperate to remain in power that they are willing to distort fact, defy precedent and constitutional practice to do so. I can understand them, Mr. Speaker, but I cannot agree with them nor can I condone their action.

My understanding of their argument is that they claim their defeat was an unfortunate and ridiculous accident, something abnormal and not quite cricket. They further claim, as I understand it, that whatever happened on Monday night, the question upon which they met defeat does not properly constitute a question of lack of confidence.

My understanding of their case as advanced so far is that they now wish to ask this house to reverse itself, to erase the entire proceedings of black Monday and stop trying to