

*Motion Respecting House Vote*

If the question of the significance of a vote is in the first place one for the Prime Minister and the government, in the second place it certainly is a matter for the House of Commons. On this occasion which we are now discussing, brought on by the vote which took place here last Monday, the Prime Minister has not, as did other prime ministers as suggested by the passage I have just read to the house, decided to ignore what has taken place. He has realized that the House of Commons is directly involved here because the motion before the house last Monday dealt with a bill of great importance.

Consequently, the Prime Minister has now come to the house asking the house to interpret the meaning of its vote last Monday. This is not unusual. I refer you to another example, sir. As recently as 1944 in Great Britain the government of the day lost a measure by a vote in committee of the whole, as we would say.

**Mr. Bell (Carleton):** Yes, in committee of the whole.

**An hon. Member:** That is different.

**Mr. Stewart:** It lost a measure in committee of the whole by a vote of 117 to 116. The following day the prime minister, Mr. Churchill, had this to say:

It would not be possible for His Majesty's government to leave matters where they stood when the motion to report progress was accepted. At this very serious time in the progress of the war, there must be no doubt or question of the support which the government enjoy in the House of Commons. Accordingly we have decided, as the first business on the next sitting day, to resume the committee stage of the education bill, and to delete clause 82, as amended, entirely from the measure. This act of deletion will be regarded as a vote of confidence in the present administration. If the government do not secure an adequate majority, it will entail the usual constitutional consequences. Should the house agree to the deletion of the clause, the government propose to move to reinstate the original clause, without the amendment, on the report stage, and to treat its passage throughout as a matter of confidence.

I should add, just to complete the story, that the motion was carried by a vote of 425 to 23. What the prime minister of Great Britain, Mr. Churchill, did on that occasion was not only to put aside a decision made in committee of the whole on a bill, but also to insist, under confidence, that the committee of the whole reinstate the clause as put before the committee by the government. This is going far, far beyond what the present government is asking in this instance. All the present government is asking in this instance

[Mr. Stewart.]

is that the house make a distinction between two questions: first, the question on the third reading of the bill that was before the house last Monday and, second, the question of confidence. It is the second question that is now being debated in this house.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?

**Mr. Stewart:** If I have time, Mr. Speaker, when I have concluded my speech.

**Mr. Muir (Cape Breton North and Victoria):** Don't take him away from his notes; he will never get back to them.

**Mr. Stewart:** The course the Prime Minister has taken is the one counselled by various constitutional authorities and counselled also by certain newspapers. I have here a quotation from the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*. In this editorial, which has some unflattering things to say about this government, we find these words:

Mr. Pearson can ask for a vote of confidence in his government.

This is what the Prime Minister is doing. It was suggested this morning by the Leader of the Opposition that the motion that has been put before the house is inflammatory. I think if we read the motion we will see that this is not true. The motion is not asking members on this side or members opposite to confer a kind of blanket blessing and endorsement on the policies, past actions and future expectations of the present Liberal government. It would be foolish, I think, to propose to embarrass hon. members opposite in that way. The government has put before the house a motion which is very carefully drawn to one question, namely the significance of the vote here last Monday. It is essential for hon. members to decide whether or not the taint of non-confidence pertains to the vote that took place. There is no question as to the effect of the main decision; but the question is, does it also bear the taint of non-confidence? That is what the house now has to decide. That is what is in dispute here this afternoon. I think there is really nothing very deceptive about the motion.

The Conservatives have said that the vote that took place last Monday is parallel to the vote that took place here on February 5, 1963. I think they are wrong in saying that. In the first place, what was then before the house was a supply motion to which an amendment had been moved, and as if to make the matter doubly sure there was a subamendment