

*Motion Respecting House Vote*

believe that this is any reason for voting confidence in the government. All I say is: What a confession to make to this house. The government, having been in office all these years, comes to this house and states that Canada is facing a very difficult situation, that we are facing a crisis and had better not try to change horses at this stage of the game.

The government has brought in this motion, Mr. Speaker. I know the Prime Minister is a great sportsman. He has proven that and we all appreciate that he is interested in these things. However, I do not think the Prime Minister would want to change the rules of the game halfway through the course of the game. He is now asking us in this crisis to change the rules of the game halfway through and allow him to bypass the traditional position of a government in the face of defeat. Many of us agree that some fundamental changes are desirable in our rules of procedure and other matters, but until the rules are changed I say, let us play the game according to the rules.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, may I say that the members of this party have fulfilled their promise to endeavour to provide a measure of stability in a minority government situation. The government has failed to produce the goods so we cannot express our confidence in the government in this crucial vote.

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. McIntosh:** Sorry about that, chief.

**Mr. Sharp:** May I say to the gentleman who made that opening remark that at any time the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) feels I am not discharging my responsibilities to the government or to this parliament I will gladly resign.

**Some hon. Members:** When?

**Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert):** Why wait till spring?

**Mr. Sharp:** I should add, of course, that I am not anxious to keep the job indefinitely.

This debate, Mr. Speaker, takes place at a critical time in the affairs of our country and in the interests of the nation I urge a speedy and favourable decision on the motion before the house. This is not the time for a prolonged debate that will paralyse this parliament as well as the public business of this country. Nor is this the time to plunge the country into an election. If there seems to be some other alternative available then I should

[Mr. Patterson.]

like to say, speaking personally, that I know of no one else in this house who can discharge the function of Prime Minister of this country better than the present Prime Minister.

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

**Mr. Horner (Acadia):** He is a lame-duck Prime Minister.

**Mr. Sharp:** My only regret, Mr. Speaker, is that he has decided to move on to better things after April 6. However, that is a decision he has made personally without consultation with any of the rest of us.

I listened with incredulity to the speeches today of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) and the leader of the New Democratic party. In the first place I listened to the Leader of the Opposition expecting that he would produce some precedents to bolster the constitutional position that he placed before the house today. However, I listened in vain. The Prime Minister certainly won that particular engagement hands down.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Sharp:** The Prime Minister quoted authorities which have been recognized throughout the British Commonwealth and in all British parliamentary institutions. The only authority that the Leader of the Opposition could quote was himself, and under the circumstances I really think he was outvoted.

The Leader of the Opposition poses as a reasonable and responsible man. He certainly has the manner; he is very quiet and very dignified. But nowhere in his remarks did I detect the slightest recognition of the nature of the problems facing this country. I have come to the conclusion that what the Leader of the Opposition wants at any cost is an election. He wants an election regardless of the consequences. I suggest he wants to have an election as soon as possible before the image that was created at the Conservative leadership convention fades away entirely, and I do not blame him.

I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that the Liberal party has no fear of an election and certainly no fear of the party that is led by my hon. friend. However, this is not the time for an election. Unlike hon. members opposite, the people of Canada do not want an election.

**Mr. Churchill:** How do you know?