

Motion Respecting House Vote

as do my colleagues. But what are we to think of a government that says it is irresponsible of the opposition to take a stand on the constitution because the government through its own unimaginable incompetence has so undermined the economy that everybody must keep perfectly quiet and not rock the boat, everybody must stay quiet and not disturb this hopelessly incompetent government because if they did it might mean catastrophe?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: The Prime Minister has said, as I understood him, that there are few things this country needs less than a general election. I am not insisting on a general election, Mr. Speaker. I have never since this difficulty developed insisted on a general election. I have made it very clear to the right hon. gentleman, through media which I am sure he reads, what my position is and what his alternatives are. I have also said that if the Governor General were to invite me to form a government it would be my duty, which I would carry out, to try to examine the possibilities. I say that I am not grasping for power, although the government is clearly insisting on holding on to it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: I do not want to be the Prime Minister of this country unless I have the approval of the people.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: But I am sure that most people in this country feel very much like Cromwell did on a certain occasion when I believe he said: "In the name of God, go".

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Hamilton: That chicken came home.

Mr. Stanfield: The Prime Minister says there are fewer things this country needs than a general election. Of course this did not deter him in 1965—

Some hon. Members: Oh no.

Mr. Stanfield: —only two years after the previous general election. My hon. friends opposite seem to have a double standard. We are not insisting that the country should have a general election right away but I do say that in fact a general election before too long may be the only way of achieving stability. It may be the only way the people have to get rid of this government. If the Prime Minister

[Mr. Stanfield.]

says there are few things this country needs less than a general election, I say there are few things this country needs less than this government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, my right hon. friend has suggested outside this house to the Canadian public that there was something underhanded, that there was some trickery involved in what happened on Monday night. I notice he takes a different line here in the house where people can answer him. I say again, Mr. Speaker, that we have offered every reasonable accommodation to the government and to the ministers of the government who are candidates for the Liberal leadership, as they should be and as I agree we should. The order of business of the house has frequently been changed in order to meet the convenience of ministers of the government who are candidates for the Liberal leadership and who need to be absent from the house on that account. I mentioned one example in connection with the finance bill. In fact we have frequently done so. We have been prepared to go along with this although it has made the conduct of the business a little haphazard and disorderly. We have absolutely no wish to interfere with the leadership convention of my hon. friends opposite and will certainly go a long way to accommodate them and make certain they can pursue their leadership convention in peace and tranquility.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: But I do say that no matter how willing we may be to accommodate our hon. friends opposite in this regard we are certainly under no obligation to vote for every measure this government may put before the house.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: We do not have to pass every bill. We have an obligation to the public to scrutinize every measure carefully. As I say, we voted against this bill on second reading, in committee and, of course, as everybody knows, on third reading. Yet the Prime Minister has given the Canadian people the impression that somehow or other we have taken advantage of the fact that there is to be a leadership convention, that somehow or other we have not afforded the Liberals the same kind of accommodation that they afforded us. I say in all sincerity, Mr. Speaker, that it was the Prime Minister who decided, it