

Adjournment

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: I do not now challenge the right to tax. There may be constitutional issues, I do not know. I will not raise them at this time. I think I can say that members of this House know that the representatives from Alberta are reasonable and moderate people.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: Many of the attempts by this government to deal with the effects of inflation have been levelled at western Canada. Alberta has received a shellacking. Albertans, and certainly their representatives here, are confident that if the government of Alberta had been given a reasonable opportunity to sit down and talk with the Prime Minister, the minister or his officials, they could have worked out an arrangement which would have had the desired effect. However, this was not done.

Did the government know about this crisis? If not, they are guilty of gross negligence. If they did not know about it and did not do anything, they are guilty of gross incompetence. If I had an hour and a half, I could quote numerous illustrations to show they are guilty of both of these.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: All that was required was that degree of consultation and discussion that usually takes place between two civilized groups of people. That was not done. One can well understand the Alberta government and people being angered and annoyed. I am in hopes that some arrangement will be worked out for the benefit of the people of Canada in general, and of the people of Alberta in particular. I must say I am shocked and annoyed by the way in which the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has conducted himself in his dealings with respect to this important issue at the present stage in our economic affairs. The minister and the government have apparently determined to proceed by way of taxation.

● (1230)

There was a situation in 1948 when the then minister of finance announced a tax by radio. The present minister did so by means of a press release. He indicated in a press release that a tax would likely be imposed on the export of crude petroleum and that details would be announced later. I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that in 1948 an interesting debate took place in this chamber. The right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) took part in it as did the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). Even some supporters of the Liberal party also took part and, to their credit, criticized the Liberal government strongly, taking the position that no taxation could be imposed without the consent of parliament. Nowadays, supporters of the Liberal party do not believe this. They believe taxation is imposed by the grace of the party and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner). That is their attitude.

Mr. Foster: Be serious.

Mr. Baldwin: This tax is to come into effect on October 1. The motion before us says we shall not come back until October 15. Will there be a budget then, will there be a ways and means resolution? It seems most unlikely. What kind of debate will take place on the issue? Will the government impose and collect the tax in the interval? I know that when the Minister of Finance in his budget presentation brings down ways and means resolutions there is a general assumption in the country that they take effect as and from that date. This situation is, of course, without foundation in law. In the United Kingdom a different situation prevails because there is a statute which says that a ways and means resolution has the effect of law until legislation is passed. I say it is a shabby way for the government to conduct itself in connection with this affair. It will have much to answer for when a debate ultimately takes place, and I am not speaking only about the substance of what is proposed.

Finally, I would repeat what I said earlier. We do not intend to oppose this motion. We have pressed the government, both in and out of the House, to introduce measures which in our opinion would go to the root and substance of the economic crisis which affects the people of Canada, a crisis which before many months have passed will result in a great deal of misery and unhappiness. The government has made it clear that its only answer to this situation is contained within the legislative program which the Minister of Justice recited today. We think this program is most inadequate. We believe there are other things which ought to be done. We have outlined our proposals in the form of opposition day motions, in the course of debates and in the course of questions asked during the question period. We have made it plain that we are completely dissatisfied with what the government has proposed.

Nevertheless, it is hon. members over there, sitting on the treasury benches, who form the government. They alone have the right to introduce legislation touching financial measures which could go to the root of the problems facing us. We on this side of the House have done all we can. It is our intention now, if this motion passes, to go to the country—not as we would like to go, in an election—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin:—but to tell our story to the people of Canada in our constituencies in all parts of the country, to talk to Chambers of Commerce, farm unions, to those engaged in industry and advise them that this is an incompetent government, that it is incapable of governing and one which remains in office only because it is buoyed up by hon. members to my left. I do not intend to be critical of the New Democratic Party. Its members have a constitutional right, if they choose, to continue to support the government, and it seems plain that with such support the present administration is likely to stay in office until at least some time in the coming year. This is a matter between the NDP, its conscience and the voters of Canada which the party will have to face.

For our part, we believe we can now serve a more useful purpose by attempting to persuade the people of Canada to add their pressures to ours so that when we do come back on October 15 the government, at long last, may have