

Alleged Lack of Government Leadership

Mr. Speaker: Order. While an hon. member may seek to interrupt the Leader of the Opposition in order to ask a question, I think that beyond that we will get along better with fewer interruptions. This applies to both sides of the house.

Mr. Pearson: I am sure it does apply to both sides, but the application has only been noticeable on one side this afternoon. Especially after the events of last week, Mr. Speaker, it is surely our duty on this side to do what we can to bring to an end the most inefficient, confused and indecisive government in our history. I am glad the Prime Minister is taking that down too.

Mr. Diefenbaker: As a matter of fact, I have heard that story for a long time. The hon. gentleman flatters himself.

Mr. Pearson: This is a government which has had no idea of where it was going; and if it had it would have had no idea how to get there; and if it had it would never have been able to make a decision to start moving there. It is a government which has been unable to deal with problems because it has not been able to understand most of them, and where it did understand a problem it was not able to make up its mind what to do about it. It has so mismanaged its affairs that it is now even running out of money. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, this government is ending. It is ending unwept, unhonoured and unsung.

Mr. Diefenbaker: But returned whenever it goes to the country.

Mr. Pearson: The Prime Minister says it will be returned whenever it goes to the country. There is a new definition of an optimist. This government is ending both with a bang and a whimper. The country now has a chance to choose a better government and we hope soon. It should be given a chance to choose a better government. So, Mr. Speaker, surely it is the duty of all members of the opposition in this house to give the people a chance to return what they would consider to be a better government. We can only do that by getting rid of this one, and that can only be done by taking a united stand.

No government has any right to go on sitting on the benches opposite and failing so lamentably, so miserably, to govern. I say to the opposition parties that all of us, I think, have had enough of this manoeuvring, this talk, this dramatic trickery of last Friday while the country's business is in disarray—

Mr. Starr: Listen to who is talking.

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Mr. Pearson:—while the nation cries out for action and all we get is confusion and evasion.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): And obstruction.

Mr. Pearson: I remember—

Mr. Starr: Mostly obstruction.

Mr. Pearson:—in the House of Commons at Westminster a very dramatic occasion—

Mr. Diefenbaker: We used that against you.

Mr. Pearson:—in 1940—

Mr. Diefenbaker: We used that against you in 1955.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Pearson: I have said this before, Mr. Speaker, but it is more apposite to this house and government than ever before, and I do not mind repeating it. In 1940 there was a government in office in Great Britain during the darkest days of the war which did not have those qualities of action and decision necessary to face the emergency at that time. We face emergencies and problems in this country at this time. We need a government that will make decisions, face up to these problems and do something about them. I refer to a supporter of the government at Westminster in 1940 who remained a friend of the members of that government and who gave them credit for good will and good intentions. He must have felt very sad in making the kind of speech he had to make, but at that time he said, quoting the immortal words of Cromwell when he went into the Long Parliament:

You have sat here too long for the little good that you have been doing.

An hon. Member: That is why the people kicked you out in 1957.

Mr. Pearson: That is a very apposite observation, but I can assure hon. members that the hon. gentlemen opposite will never be faced with 22 years of decision.

Then, Mr. Amory went on to quote Cromwell:

Depart, I say, and let's have done with you. In God's name, go.

In going, Mr. Speaker, they will at least perform one decisive service to the Canadian people. They will give the people a chance to choose a better parliament and a better government. So, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Chevrier):

That all the words after "that" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"this government, because of lack of leadership, the breakdown of unity in the cabinet, and confusion and indecision in dealing with national and international problems, does not have the confidence of the Canadian people."