

Motion Respecting House Vote

[English]

Mr. A. B. Patterson (Fraser Valley): Mr. Speaker, last evening in a statement to the Canadian people the Prime Minister outlined what he anticipated would be the procedure today and the position of the government with respect to this crisis in which they find themselves.

In the course of that presentation to the Canadian people reference was made to the fact that this is a situation which minority governments face constantly, but I suggest that this has nothing to do with a minority government situation, in view of the fact that when the vote was taken the other evening a great percentage of government supporters were not present in the house. Therefore had the government seen to it that their members were present and voting, there would have been no situation develop as we find it today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Patterson: Therefore I cannot agree that this situation has anything whatsoever to do with the minority position in which the government finds itself. The Prime Minister also referred to the fact that the bill had previously passed all stages and had been supported by the House of Commons, and therefore brought into question the position that was being taken that the vote on third reading was actually a vote of non-confidence.

However, Mr. Speaker, it has been brought to my attention this morning that the vote on third reading was a heavier vote than any that were taken during the committee stage or any other stage of the bill. Therefore it seems to me that the logic hardly carries through, because in the heaviest vote that was taken the government was defeated. So it appears to us that the vote was in effect a clear repudiation of the economic program of the government—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Patterson: —in view of the fact that the bill was based upon the budget resolutions which were presented to the house last fall.

Had the Prime Minister seen fit to introduce a straight motion of confidence today I think the situation would have been much easier to understand. However, he has seen fit to couch the motion in such terms that it actually implies a repudiation of the decision taken the other evening on third reading.

[Mr. Caouette.]

We would not have objected to waiving the 48-hour requirement on this motion in order to get it before the house and find a solution to the problem. However, in saying that may I point out that the government could not in any way expect to get a favourable vote even had the 48-hour requirement been eliminated.

Therefore it seems to me that the only course the government can follow, since apparently it is not going to get the consent of the house to waiving the 48-hour limitation, is to move that the house adjourn until we have an opportunity to discuss the motion which has been introduced by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, since there does not seem to be unanimous consent to go ahead with this important measure now, naturally it has to be reserved until Friday when we can proceed with it. I hope that tomorrow we will be able to go ahead with our constitutional debate as planned.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Pearson: This is a very important discussion on constitutional changes.

Mr. Starr: You should have kept that in mind last Monday.

Mr. Pearson: Hon. gentlemen opposite are not interested in the constitution. They are interested in throwing out this government and having an election. Mr. Speaker, I move the adjournment of the house.

Mr. Speaker: I understand the right hon. leader of the government has moved the adjournment of the house.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Before the Prime Minister moved the adjournment of the house he made a suggestion as to what the house might deal with tomorrow. In other words he was implying that the adjournment he moved would be effective only until tomorrow rather than until Friday.

My point of order is that the Prime Minister is asking that the house deal with a matter of government business tomorrow before we have dealt with the question as to whether or not the government has the confidence of the house.