

Alleged Lack of Government Leadership

will be able to say to the people of Canada, "We received a mandate. It was an uncertain one. As the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson) said, we are a house of minorities, but we carried out the mandate given to us."

We can only give the people a chance, but before we do that do not let us risk an election campaign now. The other day I saw the benefits of calling an election, thinking only of the political consequences in our favour. But I asked "What will its effect be on a rising economy in the years ahead and the months ahead, unless we get those things on the statute books that would continue the upsurge of the economy of Canada?" I now ask a vote of confidence from all hon. members in the house.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would not intervene again in this debate but for the remarks of the Prime Minister, so many of which were directed to me, and the remarks of the house leader last night, so many of which were directed to me personally, challenging me to do this and challenging me to say that. I feel I must accept the invitation given to me again this afternoon in such courteous tones by the Prime Minister, to state my views on certain matters which apparently he had not satisfied himself about in my previous intervention.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard a passionate plea on the part of the Prime Minister for support from the opposition parties so that he may remain in power, so that he may remain in power not to complete the work but to begin the work that he promised to do.

The Prime Minister and his friends accuse us of being arrogant for power when we do our duty as an opposition, taking advantage of every legitimate opportunity to get rid of this government which has done so little for the Canadian people. How are we to describe the plea of the Prime Minister speaking for a government which has failed for five years and demanding that we give them another chance to bring their legislation before parliament? It reminds me of the story of the teen-age boy who killed his mother and father with an axe and then pleaded for clemency from the judge on the ground that he was an orphan.

It was a plea for power and a plea for support from those sources which are necessary to the Prime Minister, if he is not to be defeated this evening; and that is why he made his direct and definite appeal to the parties to my left. Indeed he went so far as to murmur something, trying to challenge our right to address our remarks to all parts of the house, about greater love has no man.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

This apparently was an attempt to undermine any appeal I might have made.

I do not recall making any great appeal. The members in the other parties will do what they think is right and best for the country, and we shall leave it at that. But I would like to adapt the Prime Minister's quotation of greater love, in view of the events of the last few days, to put it this way, that perhaps greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his friend for his life. I think, however, that the Prime Minister, who got a great deal of assistance from prompters around him—and I am sure he appreciated it as I do on this side when I am privileged to receive it—should be given that kind of admiration and sympathy that is afforded to a surgeon who is conducting an operation for appendicitis on a table in the cook's galley of a plunging ship in the midst of a North Atlantic storm. He is certainly doing his best with the weapons at his disposal and in the circumstances in which he finds himself.

This afternoon he made a great play of the fact that all the rumours that have been spreading are put out by the propaganda machine of the Liberal party. Mr. Speaker, since when has the propaganda machine of the Liberal party found its headquarters in this building in the office of a Conservative cabinet minister?

The Prime Minister went over the legislative proposals of the government which he says only the Liberal opposition are preventing from being put into effect. He exempted the other two opposition parties from any charge or any criticism of this kind. He says "Only give us a chance and we will get all these things through." One of the things he mentioned—and I will pick only one because I have not time to expose the falsity of the other arguments and illustrations that he brought forward—

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): You have unlimited time.

Mr. Pearson: —as one illustration of what they had been trying to do was the matter of portable pensions. There is something. He said, "If we had only had a chance we could have got that measure through". Well, Mr. Speaker, that proposal was in the speech from the throne. A national scheme of portable pensions, to which this party is committed, of course requires co-operation, consultation and agreement with the provinces. When we asked the question the other day as to whether any steps had been taken to get in touch with the provinces in connection with this very important matter, when we asked for a return on this matter, we found that at the time the question was asked not