

Motion Respecting House Vote

was concerned, it was a want of confidence motion and everyone who voted expected it would be looked upon in that way. The suggestion is that we were not voting non-confidence on that bill because of the situation which existed and the fact that it was not declared to be a want of confidence motion. I say again that we all expected it would be considered as such and therefore the motion before us today in effect is asking us to set aside our understanding of the situation at that time, to set aside what we believed to be the true situation with regard to the bill, to set aside the objective we had in mind when we voted on the bill, to do away with all of that and in the vote on the motion now before us to imply that we did not intend the previous vote to be one of want of confidence.

● (3:20 p.m.)

Unfortunately the impression has been left across the country that on every stage of the tax bill the house in its entirety voted in favour of the measure. Last night I had a telephone call from one of my constituents. This gentleman said, "Is it right that all of you people supported the government on all of these stages of the bill and then voted against it on third reading?" I said, "most definitely not." He said, "Well, that is the impression we have out here in this part of the country." Whether it was intentional or not, I believe the impression created was that members on the opposition side voted in support of that measure during its various stages. This was certainly not so. As has been pointed out by other speakers, the opposition was consistent throughout the various stages of the bill.

There has been considerable discussion about the constitutionality of that vote and whether the government has a right to bring in a want of confidence motion over and above that vote. This reminds us somewhat of events that took place several years ago. The present Prime Minister was leader of the opposition at that time and he did not even believe that a vote of non-confidence in the government was necessary. He said, "You ought to move over and let us form a government." I believe this position was a little more out of line than that taken by the opposition in the house today.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, reference has been made to the Prime Minister's allegation that there was a plot to defeat the government on the tax issue. I say categorically once again that there was no plot so far as we

[Mr. Patterson.]

were concerned. There was no collusion. The Prime Minister said he was not implying that there was collusion. There was no collusion with any other party on that vote. We voted as we believed we should vote. Let me ask the Prime Minister this question. Even if the opposition had combined deliberately to defeat the government, what would have been wrong with a situation like that? I cannot see anything wrong with it. I recall that when the right hon. gentleman was leader of the official opposition the Liberals, in order to upset the government of that day, voted for an amendment submitted by the Social Credit party in which they stated they did not believe but they voted for it to get rid of the government.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Patterson: How can the right hon. gentleman now imply there is anything dastardly about the opposition getting together in order to defeat a government when it is felt that government has lost the confidence of this country?

There is another question which I think is fundamental. How would the government have regarded the vote on Bill No. C-193 had they been looking for an excuse to call an election? I do not believe there would have been any discussion about it. I do not believe there would have been any argument. I do not believe they would have thrown up any defence or tried to introduce another confidence motion. They would have gone happily on their way because they would have been anxious to have another election.

The Prime Minister said that the government had to decide whether or not it was in the national interest to have a general election. I wonder whether the right hon. gentleman considered it was in the national interest or in the interest of the Liberal party to have an election in the fall of 1965? I do not believe that entered into their consideration when they made a decision to call an election just two years after the country had experienced an election.

We all know that it is traditional for a government to resign when it loses a vote on an essential measure such as the one which was presented to us the other evening. The Prime Minister brought forward a lot of constitutional experts to give testimony on this matter. Once again I say that had it been the desire of the government to have an election he would not have dragged in all these constitutional experts to say that we ought to do