

Alleged Lack of Government Leadership

if you like, of how not to conduct the nation's business. However, only two days were allocated to the main estimates prior to the election. With that situation facing the government it must have known, if it knew anything, the kind of financial box it was going to get into. With that situation facing it, it decided to let the new members cool off and to call parliament on September 27. That was done. Those weeks were lost.

Mr. Chevrier: More than three months.

Mr. Pearson: Last autumn when we met, we had only one supply day. Only one department was called and that department was withdrawn after two or three days debate during which the Minister of Agriculture took up a good deal of time, and nobody complained about that matter.

Mr. Hamilton: I never spoke once.

Mr. Pearson: With the estimates in that situation and with interim supply developing to the point where the government was not going to be able to carry on for lack of money, the government then decided they would not come back until January 21. And since we have come back, this is the first supply day we have had. What a record that is, Mr. Speaker, of what I might call auto-obstruction.

There are, of course, other indications of inaction and lack of efficient conduct of the nation's business. We were told that certain things were going to be done. Legislation was forecast, some of it even introduced but not acted on, all of it important. I was going to mention that the Columbia river treaty is a shining example, though that is not the right expression, for indecision and confusion. Then there are redistribution, senate reform, contributory old age pensions, the unemployment insurance fund, abolition of closure and the O'Leary report. None of these things have been brought before us.

Mr. Diefenbaker: What about the national development board? Why don't you mention that?

Mr. Pearson: There have been some very useful pieces of legislation passed—the national development board, the Atlantic development board—

Mr. Diefenbaker: You held it up.

Mr. Pearson: Of course when we debate these matters like the national development board we are then told by the Prime Minister that we are holding them up.

Mr. Diefenbaker: You are.

[Mr. Pearson.]

Mr. Pearson: Now, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Diefenbaker: Just killing time.

Mr. Pearson: —all this means—

An hon. Member: A guilty conscience.

Mr. Pearson: —that the present government has broken down. It has lost the capacity to manage not only the nation's business but parliamentary business, and in order to get itself out of the difficulty in which it finds itself financially, and it will certainly be in difficulty—

Mr. Starr: You are going to make sure.

Mr. Pearson: Well, interim supply ran out on the first or second of February and we have not been approached by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Nowlan) for the eleventh twelfth which will now be required for the next month. This government has so badly managed the affairs of this house, apart from the affairs of the country, that it has broken down, and it conceals its default by shouting "obstruction". There is one way of getting out of this situation and that is to bring this parliament to an end.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Would the Leader of the Opposition permit a question?

Mr. Pearson: Yes.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): He has just been speaking about supply—

Mr. McIlraith: He is speaking about indecision.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): —and he is now proposing that parliament should be dissolved. How would he propose to meet the problem of interim supply for the next six months if there were an election?

Mr. Pearson: My hon. friend is now Minister of Justice and he used to be minister of finance. He should know something about these matters. Surely he knows that if this parliament is brought to an end by dissolution the government can pay its bills by Governor General's warrants, and the minister is an expert in doing that because he has done it before.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): May I take it, then, that that is the proposal of the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Pearson: The minister is a very patient person and if he will wait for a very few moments he will hear the motion I am going to move. I say the record is such—

Mr. Churchill: You are very evasive.

An hon. Member: Indecisive.