

*Motion Respecting House Vote*

**Mr. Ralph Cowan (York-Humber):** Mr. Speaker, I feel impelled to rise and participate in this debate because of remarks that have been made, some involving myself personally to which I shall refer later. But before launching into the facts and figures related to this situation, I wondered if the members of the house were aware that if this vote carries in favour of the cabinet the Liberal party is adopting Nancy Greene as its patron saint, since she typifies how to win while going downhill.

I had prepared most of my remarks for this evening prior to the manufacture of the majority to put down the so-called manufactured crisis. I want the comments I am going to make to be on the record because I believe that the upset a week ago Monday and the debate of the last few days has shown the absolute necessity of altering the rules of procedure in the Canadian House of Commons.

● (8:30 p.m.)

I have been arguing for 40 years that the British and Canadian system of parliamentary responsibility, under which a government may be defeated on any vote, is ridiculous; that we in this country should adopt the United States system whereby Congress is free to vote as it likes during the four years of its life; and the United States parliamentary or governmental system is not upset. In my close study of the United States system during my lifetime I have seen beaten down many measures that the executive branch—the cabinet—had wanted to see carried. But the executive branch did not have to leave Washington. During the four year term members are free to speak their minds; no threat is held over them to the effect: “Unless you support the administration’s proposals we will have a general election right away”. This situation—I will quote the Secretary of State (Miss LaMarsh): “this rotten situation”—that developed a week ago Monday because of poor handling on the Liberal side of the house puts the klieg lights on a circumstance that should be corrected.

I believe that good will come out of this poor situation because we will have to alter the rules of the house, and alter them quickly. We cannot have a situation continue whereby men who hold a definite opinion on a certain vote will still vote for the motion if they are sitting to the right of the Speaker because they are told that it is the desire of the cabinet that the motion pass, while good men and women sitting on the left of the

[Mr. Knowles.]

Speaker will vote against it because that is the opposition’s fancied role.

This situation is ridiculous, as I say. There are brains on both sides of the aisle in the Canadian House of Commons, and the Canadian nation is entitled to the benefit of those brains. It is childish to say that all proper thinking occurs only to the right of the Speaker, and faulty thinking to the left. That is a fallacy that cannot be allowed to stand. A majority vote in the chamber should set the law of the land.

I am getting fed up to the teeth listening to people talk of Harry Truman’s celebrated remark: “If you can’t stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen”. I agree with that remark of the ex-president. Criticism that is directed to individual members of the House of Commons and Senate can often only be endured on the basis that if you cannot stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. However, I should like to give a Canadian simile that I think is better, and say: “If you can’t last the three periods of a hockey game, don’t put on your skates”.

I have in my hand, Mr. Speaker, the House of Commons provisional reprint of the standing orders, and standing order 75, to be found at page 70, distinctly states:

Every bill shall receive three several readings, on different days, previously to being passed.

A bill is not passed until it has received three several readings. Has the Liberal party forgotten standing order 75, Mr. Speaker? In standing order 76 we read:

When a bill is read in the house, the Clerk shall certify upon it the readings—

Note the plural.

—and the time thereof. After it has passed, he shall certify the same, with the date, at the foot of the bill.

You will note, Mr. Speaker, that three readings are mandatory before the passing of a bill. It is absolutely ridiculous to stand up and argue that this was a technical defeat on a minor stage, third reading; that argument is not worthy of anyone with experience in parliament. Third reading is as important as second reading, and is as important as first reading, and it should be treated as such.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. If the party in power cannot exert eternal vigilance with regard to the measures that it brings forward, then it had better get out of office and let somebody who can exert eternal vigilance take over the treasury benches. To make the