

Motion Respecting House Vote

disagreements without having a general election each time. A general election is an instrument given to the government to demonstrate that it has control over and the confidence of the houses. Prorogation of parliament, as everyone knows, is an instrument through which the government exercises its authority over the houses. Now, we are doing the opposite: We are not threatening the house with dissolution. We say to the house: We are not going, over your head, to the people, to know what they think—

[English]

Mr. Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, would the minister permit a question?

[Translation]

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, may I be allowed to conclude my peroration, after which I shall answer questions.

We are not going to the people, over the heads of the parliamentarians, to know what the people think. We are asking the parliamentarians what they think. That is the question of confidence we put last Monday, the question now before the house. That is the question on the order paper, Mr. Speaker.

I am now prepared to hear the question of the hon. member.

• (4:50 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): My question is this, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister tell us why in the circumstances he has outlined so eloquently the government did not present to this house a simple motion of confidence? What is the explanation for tying it in with the vote last Monday night?

[Translation]

Mr. Trudeau: Of course, I can answer that question very easily, Mr. Speaker.

If we had taken the stand to introduce a simple vote of confidence before the house, if we had put on the order paper: This house has confidence in the government, no doubt several members would have refused to vote yea.

[English]

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): Collusion is the answer.

[Translation]

Mr. Trudeau: I do not know why they are so surprised. We admitted it right from the beginning.

[Mr. Trudeau.]

Some hon. members have spoken to that effect and I repeat their assertions. They told us that their vote last Monday night was not a non-confidence vote. They said that what they wanted to do that evening was simply to defeat that legislation.

And, on that subject, I refer to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) who stated as can be found on page 132 of the *Debates* of January 31, 1966, that the opposition must have the right to vote against bills to state its opposition to bills or its disagreement with the government, without necessarily expressing a lack of confidence in the government.

Mr. Speaker, I have here the quotation and it might be useful to read it:

[English]

—we have the right to vote on issues of substance separate from the question of an election . . . we can vote on the other matter—

The matter of confidence.

—any time the government wishes.

This is exactly what is happening. We are saying that on that Monday certain members of the opposition voted against the bill because they wanted to defeat the bill. What the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) says is that if we ask the house to vote on the matter of confidence they will do so but that certainly they do not wish to defeat the government every time they defeat a bill. This is exactly the argument which was put forward, and it is a sensible argument.

Mr. Knowles: May I ask the minister a question? Was I not asking for that position to be stated before the vote was taken, not after the vote had been taken and the government had lost?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I submit that this is not the case. These are the rules of parliament. They have been quoted at length by the hon. member and they are quite clear. The difference between the argument put forward by the hon. member and my own position is that the hon. member wishes to be on the side of those who decide if the defeat of a specific bill is the defeat of the government. That is the difference. We say we will decide if the defeat of a specific bill is the defeat of the government.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.