

Motion Respecting House Vote

The Prime Minister's party forms the government. It and it alone controls the comings and goings of parliament and determines what matters of national business are urgent. As the leader of the country and of his party the Prime Minister knew all this quite well when he chose to announce a leisurely program for his retirement, thus throwing the gates wide open to the parliamentary chaos that has followed. The Prime Minister has often drawn attention to the skill and knowledge required to steer a minority government through several years of stormy parliamentary voyaging. Being in possession of all this skill and knowledge he must surely have been perceptive enough to have seen the reefs ahead in the narrow and dangerous political waters into which he steered his ship when he decided to stage his farewell performance. The decision to go through the process of selecting his successor was made during a period when parliament was sitting and seized with critical national business. Having set the stage and written the script, can he now blame the players?

I do not believe there is a member in this house, Mr. Speaker, who would willingly try to hamper the government party in its selection of a new leader. I know of no one, certainly no one in my party, who wishes to embarrass the government party in this regard. We realize that it is a necessary and important event in the life of a political party. We might even agree that it has some importance to the nation as a whole. But surely no one in his senses, even one as far gone in greed and arrogance as members of the cabinet, would hold that the Liberal party's leadership convention is to be placed above the well-being of Canadians and the business of the nation. The Prime Minister has the ultimate responsibility for ordering the business of the nation and for ordering the affairs of his party. If the two conflict or if one is allowed to overshadow and endanger the other, then the responsibility for that also rests squarely upon his shoulders. I hope we shall hear no more of this shallow and unworthy excuse for legitimate opposition action in this house.

● (3:50 p.m.)

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me direct a sincere and honest plea to the government to think first of Canada and of parliament, to place them above their greedy desire for what, under the most favourable estimate, can only be a few weeks or months of barren and anaemic power. Perhaps this will be a

[Mr. McIntosh.]

vain plea, one that falls upon ears tightly stoppered against reason and decency. If this is so, and I am afraid it is, then let me direct my plea to the ordinary members of the house and urge them to act to preserve parliamentary government and advance the best interests of the country. It was the British House of Commons that many years ago effectively killed the myth of the divine right of kings to rule. Let this House of Commons kill once and for all time the myth of the divine right of the Liberal party to rule Canada.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to speak during the current session, though on a couple of occasions events occurred that impelled me to say a few words. My purpose in maintaining silence was to play my part to the end that in so far as Her Majesty's loyal opposition was concerned there would be no interference on my part that might be misconstrued in view of the change in leadership.

During the last week things have occurred that in my opinion ought not to have taken place. There is a surprising difference in the looks on the faces of those opposite today now that they know they have the support of those who see eye to eye with them—the Créditistes.

The Canadian people should have been here a week ago Monday night, Mr. Speaker. What a picture of disorder and incredible dismay was on the faces of the members of the government. Four or five of its ministers were on holiday that night, ministers who anticipate ultimately becoming prime minister of Canada. Each one has since been endeavouring to find an excuse for things turning out as they did. Not too many ministers are here today because they know the outcome. Regardless of the manner in which they have treated parliament they now know they have a numerical majority and therefore nothing else matters to them.

The record, Mr. Speaker, must be made clear. We have just listened to an address by the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. McIntosh) who gave one of the most able, complete and thorough analyses of the situation as I see it. I cannot remain silent as one who has occupied the position of prime minister and leader of the opposition, one who has been in this place for 28 years and seen parliament in all its vicissitudes.

Mention was made the other day of the fact that in the course of parliamentary debate