

Motion Respecting House Vote

Mr. Douglas: —to ask this house for a vote of confidence in view of the fact that one of its major fiscal measures was defeated in this house last Monday night.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas: In our system of parliamentary government the most important right is the right to impose taxes. This government has been denied that right by a majority of members voting on Bill No. C-193.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas: However, Mr. Speaker, the defeat of that measure and the ineptitude of the government in dealing with it are merely symptomatic of the ineptitude of the government's handling of the entire Canadian economy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas: The vote which was held on Monday night is merely the culmination of a long process of disintegration of a government which is not only inept but so badly divided that it cannot make any decisions on major matters of importance.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas: This party therefore takes the position that the government's only real option is to seek a mandate from the electorate and ask the voters of this country—

An hon. Member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Starr: If you had any principles that is what you would do.

Mr. Douglas: —whether they are willing to have a government impose a 5 per cent surtax on personal incomes at the same time they are handing back millions of dollars to corporations as the result of a refund tax that was imposed on these people. As the Prime Minister said last night, the government needs the money; but the Canadian people have a right to know whether the government needs it so badly that it should turn over tens of millions of dollars in the form of reimbursement to the corporations of this country. That is the issue on which this government should go to the electorate. That is the question on which members of the government should ask the voters for a mandate.

With reference to the motion which the Prime Minister has asked that we give consent to having debated today, I should say

[Mr. Douglas.]

that while we think the government has no moral right to ask for a vote of confidence, we do not deny its constitutional right. Had the government brought in a straight motion of confidence we might well have agreed to proceed with the debate today. However, the motion which the Prime Minister has sent to the Clerk's office is not a motion of confidence; it is a motion asking this house to repudiate a decision it has already made.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas: It is a motion asking this house to turn back the clock.

An hon. Member: Right.

Mr. Douglas: It is a motion which is so unprecedented in its arrogance that we have the right to ask for time to study it and assess its implications—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Douglas: —because I suggest to this house that this motion could be the prelude to the government seeking to reinstate Bill C-193, which otherwise it would be unable to do under the rules of the house.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas: In my opinion this is the first step in an attempt to do something which the rules of the house prevent them from doing. This is an attempt to reimpose a tax which the House of Commons by vote denied the government the right to impose.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas: Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we are compelled to ask ourselves whether we are now to have a repetition of the pipe line debate; whether we are to have another attempt to wipe the slate clean and start all over again; whether we are to have an attempt by the government to rewrite history and make the House of Commons reverse a decision that has been made in order to allow the government to then force another decision on this House of Commons and force a tax upon the Canadian people.

Therefore we cannot consent to proceeding with this motion today. If the government insists on placing it on the order paper of course it will come up on Friday. In our opinion the government ought to do what is the proper thing to do; that is, having been defeated, the government has the right to go to the Governor General and ask for