

The Address—Mr. J. A. Ross

Mr. Fournier (Maisonneuve-Rosemont): Oh, oh; that is a good one.

Mr. Ross (Souris): To break that down, just a shade under 50 per cent of the electors obtained 75 per cent of the government seats. Approximately 30 per cent elected 16 per cent of the seats occupied by the Progressive Conservative party; 13 per cent of the voters elected 5 per cent of the seats occupied by the C.C.F.; and approximately 7 per cent elected the 4 per cent occupied by Social Credit and other members.

In other words, on the basis of these figures it required approximately 15,160 votes to elect a Liberal last June, as compared with about 42,540 to elect a Progressive Conservative. Then, at that general election there were some 121 members elected to this House of Commons by minority votes within their ridings.

Mr. Cruickshank: And some by majority votes, too.

Mr. Ross (Souris): The balance were majority votes. I am stating my argument in favour of the transferable vote, as it has been in operation in Manitoba and Alberta for many years. In each of those provinces, before a candidate can be elected he must have received a majority of ballots cast on election day. In my view that is the only democratic way.

Mr. Gardiner: It made a difference in only three by-elections.

Mr. Ross (Souris): I am not saying anything about that. I do say that members should be elected by a majority of the people. I have been here as a minority candidate—on other occasions as a candidate elected by a clear majority. However, I feel strongly in the matter because I believe some day we will find ourselves in great difficulty because a majority of the people have not elected our representatives to parliament. I admit that I have been on both sides, and I think I made that quite clear. I urge the government to amend the Dominion Elections Act to provide for the transferable vote before another election occurs in this dominion.

Mr. Cruickshank: That will give us a larger majority.

Mr. Ross (Souris): That is O.K. with me if the electors so decide. Then we had the withholding of the report of the commissioner under the Combines Investigation Act on the flour-milling industry which was dated December 29, 1948, but withheld until November 7, 1949. In the debates that followed we had both the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) and the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent)

absolutely contradicting the statements they had previously made during the last session of parliament.

Then on December 9, 1949, as recorded on page 2983 of *Hansard*, there is the silly statement of the Minister of Justice that it was quite impossible for him to comply with the act and make public the report within the required fifteen days. Then he reversed himself by the action he took later on when he made public the reports on the glass and match industries within the fifteen-day period required by the act. In that connection I should like to quote from an editorial in *Maclean's* magazine of December 15, 1949, as follows:

This government has been guilty of deliberate defiance of the law, by the very men sworn to administer it. This is an offence that ought not to be forgiven.

By the Combines Investigation Act, the Minister of Justice is obliged to publish any report of the combines investigation commissioner within fifteen days of receiving it. That clause has been kept in the act by the government's own insistence. A couple of years ago John Diefenbaker urged them to modify it—he thought it too rigid, leaving the minister no option but to publish even an unfair report. The government brushed him off. The "white light of publicity" was just what they wanted, they said; abolition of that clause would defeat the main purpose of the act.

That was their attitude until December 29, 1948, when Fred McGregor turned in his report on the flour milling industry.

And then again:

So, in the words of justice minister Stuart Garson, the government "took the responsibility" of ignoring the law. Instead of publishing the McGregor report, they sat on it until after the election.

This action is indefensible—as the government well knows. No coherent defence of it has been attempted. Liberal M.P.'s admit cheerfully that the government is wholly in the wrong, but they add cynically that the voters will have forgotten it by 1953.

If we forget that easily we deserve the kind of treatment we've been getting.

Then this afternoon I listened to my good friend, the hon. member for Fort William (Mr. McIvor), refer to the generosity of the Minister of Justice. I am sure the hon. member would have obtained endorsement of his statement if he had consulted with the officials of the millers' association. I am sure they would have told him that they also appreciated the great generosity of our Minister of Justice. At page 79 of the report it is stated that in effect the millers' association had a double set of minutes. Surely that matter should have been looked into, but yet the report was withheld until the time had expired when anybody could institute legal action against the millers. Only the courts of this land could decide whether they were guilty or not.