

The Address—Mr. Thompson

abdication of responsibility, a possibility which could and should be taken care of by specific votes of non-confidence.

The Leader of the Official Opposition went to great lengths earlier in the debate to justify his intention to move votes of non-confidence. He challenged the government and he challenged the other parties of the opposition for having changed their tune and for being part of, as he described it, a new concept of parliamentary philosophy. May I remind the hon. gentleman that conditions have changed, that they are vastly different today than they were in 1957 or in 1962 or even in 1964. I say that motions of non-confidence intended at this time to overthrow the government are in direct contradiction to what public opinion expects of us. The hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), in recording his reasons for arguing as he did in favour of non-confidence amendments, simply revealed his personal ambition in again aspiring to be Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister stated prior to the November 8 election that if he did not get a majority government we would face another election in a year or a year and a half. Then he added, "Who wants another election?" He did not get his majority. May I ask him if it is his intention to call another election in the next year or year and a half? If the Prime Minister really wants this parliament to function and to survive for a reasonable time and if he remains consistent with what he said prior to November 8, why does he not declare a policy which would welcome amendments from the opposition? Why does he not declare that he would not consider amendments or votes on any issues, save major money bills, as endangering the defeat of his government and that in the event of defeat on any such issue there would be an opportunity to move a specific or direct non-confidence amendment in the government?

Such action would not require any change of the rules. It would not require any constitutional changes. It would be a very logical alternative at this particular time in view of the realities of the situation and would give the assurance to members on both sides of the house and to the people that it is the intention of parliament to bring forth the best possible legislation, from whatever side of the house the ideas or the suggestions may come. This would provide an opportunity for much greater participation by members of the backbenches on both sides of the house. It would make our committee work more effective. Certainly it would produce legislation

far more representative of the cross-section in the House of Commons, which after all does represent a cross-section of public opinion in Canada.

• (12:40 p.m.)

We now have before us an amendment and subamendment which, if passed, would raise pensions to \$100 a month for our senior citizens. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that I am in favour of the subject matter of these amendments. In the 1958 election the Social Credit party had as a plank in its platform pensions of \$100 a month. This has been our policy ever since. If I had time this morning I could go back and quote statements from both the Liberal and Conservative parties of the day to the effect that such a policy was sheer irresponsibility.

So it is not a question whether we agree or disagree with the subject matter of the amendment. We do agree with it because we believe pensions should be at a level which will ensure all pensioners a respectable standard of living. Last year, when the government introduced the lowering of the minimum age for pensions in annual steps from 70 to 65, we proposed at the same time that pensions should be increased \$5 per year so that by 1970 pensions for all senior citizens, widows, invalids and blind citizens would be \$100 a month for everyone who was 65 years of age or over. This is actually the subject matter of the amendment to the throne speech motion. The subamendment goes farther and suggests that the pension should be \$100 a month now for everyone 65 years of age or over.

More than that, Mr. Speaker, we suggested at that time that military pensions should be adjusted to the cost of living and that all pensions should be adjusted to keep pace with any future increases in the cost of living. The Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) wisely referred to the cost of an immediate increase in the amount of pensions, and stated that it would amount to \$855 million per year. However, as already mentioned in the debate, he failed to recognize some very important facts which, if taken into consideration, would greatly reduce this figure.

There is the recapture of a good part of this pension amount in the form of income tax. There would be a greater tax income to the general treasury simply through the impetus that the payment of such pensions would give to the general turnover of commerce in the country. Not only that, but it would replace many of the welfare payments already made. There would also be fiscal