

Redistribution

I am satisfied that if the bill stands, as it is my submission it ought to stand, until the house reconvenes on November 20, some members will come back with very definite instructions from their constituents which may have the effect of changing their views in regard to the schedule of this bill.

It is obvious that in that way and in that way alone are the views of government members going to be changed, unless the government itself decides on the course suggested, namely, that there should be conferences. It seems to me that that would be the sensible course to follow. The house is always under criticism when it appears to the public to be acting precipitately to serve some other motives than the due discharge of public business. We have seen that time and again. The impression created sometimes is fair and sometimes it is not fair, but the fact of the matter is that on this occasion when the details of the proposals were available only on Monday morning of this week, June 30, the public is unquestionably and inevitably going to come to the conclusion that this has been jammed through the house by the government majority.

What could be fairer under those circumstances than that the public should have ample opportunity to review this matter and to make the views of the public known to members who are going to have to take the responsibility eventually of voting on the schedule and the bill?

Mr. Abbott: The public do not care; it is only the members who care.

Mr. Mutch: The hon. gentleman is overestimating public interest in what goes on here.

Mr. Fleming: That is a most significant statement. The Minister of Finance says that the public does not care and the parliamentary assistant—

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Fleming: Yes, he did; he certainly did.

Mr. McIlraith: No, he did not.

Mr. Fleming: The Minister of Finance said that the public does not care and members on this side of the house besides myself heard him say it right now.

Mr. Abbott: The public does not care about this discussion, it is only interested in the result.

Mr. Fleming: The Minister of Finance is trying to change it. The fact is that the minister said the public does not care and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of

Veterans Affairs said that the public takes— words to this effect—very little interest in what goes on in the house.

Mr. Mutch: On a question of privilege, I said nothing of the sort. What I said was that the hon. member overestimated the attention the public paid to what he said.

Mr. Fleming: No, no.

Mr. Mutch: Oh, yes.

Mr. Fleming: That is not what the hon. member said. He said we overestimated the attention paid to what goes on in this house. He did not tie it down to me at all.

Mr. Mutch: You were doing the talking.

Mr. Fleming: He said we overestimated the interest of the public.

Mr. Mutch: Leave it to *Hansard*.

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Fleming: In these two significant comments you have what it seems to me is a very complete exposure of the attitude of the government in this matter. What could be more plain? The Minister of Finance takes the attitude that the public does not care.

Mr. Abbott: No, Mr. Chairman. What I said was that members are more interested in their self-preservation than the public.

Mr. Fleming: That is an afterthought. That was not the first statement of the Minister of Finance. The first statement of the Minister of Finance was that the public does not care.

Mr. Stuart (Charlotte): Easy now.

Mr. Fleming: That statement is not going to be changed. I repeat that the statement of the Minister of Finance was that the public does not care.

Mr. Mutch: That is what you say.

Mr. Fleming: That was said just as plainly as it could be. The Minister of Finance may feel unhappy now that he made it.

Mr. Abbott: He does not feel the slightest bit unhappy.

Mr. Fleming: He may feel unhappy that he made a confession of his attitude and the attitude of the government. He may feel uneasy about it.

Mr. Abbott: Not the slightest.

An hon. Member: Where do you think you are, on a county council?

Mr. Fleming: That statement is completely significant. We have the attitude of the government clearly exposed. They say that the public does not care and that it is a