

hand, the people would be forbidden to elect minority or coalition governments because, in the final analysis, that is the interpretation we would have to give to the rules. The rules must be logical, must make sense. They must look for efficiency.

We find in the past innumerable examples of governments, in general they were minority or coalition governments, sometimes unstable governments, which lost votes in the house. I merely want to recall three examples among the best known.

During the first four sessions of the Canadian parliament, from 1867 to 1871, the government was beaten nine times on votes in the house, sometimes on supply motions or monetary matters. If they had been forced to resign, as the opposition claims, there would have been nine elections in four years.

There is also another example. From 1834 to 1840, in England, the government was defeated 58 times in the House of Commons and 49 times in the House of Lords, so that in four years, there would have been about a hundred elections.

An hon. Member: Silly.

Mr. Trudeau: No, this is not silly, because one has to enter into the spirit of parliamentarism. If the people elect a minority government, as they decided to do in the last five years in Canada, we must interpret legislation so that it makes sense.

On the other hand, it would be senseless to hold dozens of elections in a few months, because here also, this happened in England from January 1924 to August 1924 when ten votes were lost in the House of Commons. Again, that would have meant ten elections in so many months.

I give these examples only to draw the following conclusion: We are here to respect the will of the people, to interpret the general will. If the people elect to the House of Commons members to govern the country, the people do so through a free vote, according to its knowledge. If, instead of electing a majority government, it elects a minority government, well, the people take this chance, and asks the minority government to govern the best it can, and not call elections as soon as it finds that it is in a minority position.

On the other hand, it is astonishing to see how few votes our minority government has lost in five years and how it has succeeded in passing innumerable bills.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

27053—444

Motion Respecting House Vote

Mr. Trudeau: What do you mean, no? It is true that the government has been in power for five years. It lost the vote on Monday night and what I find astonishing is that all of a sudden, on Monday night, the government is said by some to have lost the confidence of the house. This goes against the logic of the rules of the house.

Mr. Speaker, when there is a difference of opinion on a basic matter—

[*English*]

Mr. Nugent: Mr. Speaker, would the minister accept a question? Would he deny that the Prime Minister has the right, when the government is defeated, to advise His Excellency either to call an election or call on someone else, who the Prime Minister advises would likely enjoy the confidence of parliament, to form a government?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I do not readily see how the question is related to what I was saying, but the answer is no. I do not deny that. Of course, the government was defeated in the house, but has it lost the confidence of the house? Is it thereby forced to resign, to dissolve parliament?

My argument is clear: If the house is denied the right to express its views on a basic difference between the opposition and the government; if, when the question involved is as simple as the one put last Monday evening, do we or do we not have the confidence of the house, the house is deprived of the right to have its say, the whole parliamentary system is being negated. Because this is the law of parliament: When the government and the opposition disagree, as happens day in day out, week in week out, every time a piece of legislation is being considered, after the discussion, the house is called upon to decide on the issue. Such is the parliamentary system, Mr. Speaker.

It is not direct democracy, which is to go to the country to settle every disagreement; it is not to dissolve parliament ten times in six months. Then, indeed, this would be direct democracy.

Every time we disagree—and God knows we often do—we would have to go to the people to find out what they think? Why bother then having a parliamentary democracy, a so-called representative democracy? We are here to represent the people; as we often disagree, Mr. Speaker, we must solve those