

Motion Respecting House Vote

1962-987, dated July 11, 1962, and the import control list as amended by P.C. 1962-903, dated June 24, 1962, with particular reference to the legality of such orders.

The argument with regard to the production of those papers, which we never did see, was based on the fact that the government of the day in 1962 was imposing taxes without proper authority. This involved some sleight of hand with respect to the Customs Tariff Act and the Financial Administration Act. I have mentioned this once before in the house, and I will mention it a second time. We were all indebted to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) for having exposed the fact that the Financial Administration Act was not being observed, since it provided that a list be made and tabled showing the remission of items over \$1,000, according to the legerdemain adopted by the previous government.

If this present motion does not pass and if the Governor General should be advised to call on another person to take over control of the government, we will move from a party which has suffered defeat on the floor of the House of Commons on a money tax bill. They tell me that it was only a little bill, that it would bring in only \$475 million next year. I am telling you inflation has really hit this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Cowan: Some people sneered at the late Right Hon. C. D. Howe—I was not one of them—because in a fit of anger in this house he ejaculated, "What's a million"? If they snickered and sneered at the late C. D. Howe for asking what's a million dollars, what are they going to say when they are told that this was only a technical defeat, that it was only going to cost the cabinet \$475 million?

Now, Mr. Speaker, \$475 million is not a technical defeat, but I am faced with the choice of supporting a motion here which would allow this cabinet to prorogue the house, bring in a new session and revive the bill which was defeated a week ago Monday—and I would vote for that bill—or run the risk of turning the government over to a crew who by order in council, without reference to parliament, started to tax the people of Canada in 1962 for \$200 million a year as then estimated, and we still do not know what the total was going to be ultimately. I must state that since the cabinet took the second tooth out, and since I have a choice between six of one and half a dozen of the other I will have to vote in favour of the

[Mr. Cowan.]

motion that will be coming to a vote very shortly.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

● (9:10 p.m.)

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have often maintained and supported the thesis that it is here in the House of Commons that debates should be conducted, and not over the airways. I suggest to you, sir, that today we have had an example of extremely useful debate which has contributed very much to the serious subject that we have before us.

We have had the good fortune to hear from experienced and able people today. We have had new ideas put before us that had not been canvassed previously. We have had some other ideas and suggestions underlined and brought more forcibly to our attention. That is why I have always maintained that here in the House of Commons is where debate should be conducted, even if it takes a little time and is not completed in one or two days. On a matter like this, which the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) in his very reasoned and able speech pointed out affects the constitution of our country, why should we not debate the thing at some length?

This will become an historic debate. It will be referred to for years by political scientists, historians, and all those who are studying the history of parliament. The ideas that have been put forward today should be considered. If modifications should be introduced into our parliament this is the place in which that should be done, for parliament itself is an evolving institution.

It has changed over the years, and yet it has remained the same; it has remained the centre, the heart and the soul of democracy and of freedom. So, sir, that is one reason I approve of having debates in the House of Commons which are not terminated in one or two days. I do not object to the statements that have been made on radio and television. What I do object to is the implication to the public that two or three days of television and radio conversations and newspaper editorials ends the issue. That is what I object to—the implication that then there should be a counting of heads, and let us get on with something else. I believe today's debate has shown that there is some value to my criticism of a public debate over the air waves.