

The Address—Mr. Hopkins

When I refer to the opposition, I could make the same suggestion about the back-benchers on the government side who would love an opportunity to express their opinions without being told that they must vote for the government on any occasion. We must be able to express an opinion without threats which seek to establish that an adverse expression of opinion constitutes a call for an election. This attitude of the government to which I refer is an attitude of playing Russian roulette; it is an attitude that will keep this house in a constant state of election alertness. Every vote in this house could become a cliff-hanger, and sooner or later this government may fall by accident. Then the government will have no one to blame but itself.

A good example of the kind of thing we can expect is the amendment that has been moved by the Conservative party and will be voted upon tonight. This afternoon the New Democratic party released a statement to the press, which I should like to read into the record:

The New Democratic party re-emphasizes its position that amendments to the Speech from the Throne do not constitute non-confidence motions unless they specifically say so. We do not intend to allow the government to blackmail us into silence by the constant threat of an election. Neither do we intend to allow the Conservatives to manoeuvre us into a constant bear-baiting of the government by the moving of phony amendments.

The amendment moved by the official opposition savours more of harassment than an attempt to deal with a matter which properly belongs to this debate. It is obvious that the sales tax is a matter for the budget where it can be considered in conjunction with all other tax proposals. The New Democrats believe now, as we argued in the last parliament, that the government should seek an early opportunity to remove the 11 per cent sales tax on building materials as an incentive to home construction and we intend to urge this in the budget debate.

However, the amendment now before the house seems to us to be an attempt to keep the political pot boiling without any constructive purpose. As we have shown already, we are prepared to support or move amendments calling upon the house to express its views on major issues of policy but we do not favour using this privilege for the purpose of pointless harassment. We will not hesitate to register our views on the substance of this amendment at the appropriate time but we have no intention of being manoeuvred into helping those transparently seeking to keep parliament in a continual state of ferment at a time when there is so much to be done.

This is a time for constructive proposals and legislative action but not for playing games with parliament. In our opinion the amendment proposed by the Conservatives seems to have no basis other than political gamesmanship and we shall therefore vote against it.

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If the government is faced with a whole series of such pointless amendments, it should declare its intention clearly to continue unless defeated on a specific motion of no confidence.

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew North): Mr. Speaker, along with the other members of this house who have spoken thus far, I should like to congratulate you not only upon your nomination as Speaker of this house, but also for the way in which you have conducted the business of the house so far. I have every confidence in you and I know that this house will be conducted in an orderly and business-like manner. I should like to congratulate also the Deputy Speaker, and for the same reasons.

May I at the same time extend my congratulations to the mover (Mr. Goyer) and seconder (Mr. Stanbury) of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. I am very proud of these colleagues. I am pleased to have this opportunity to sit in the twenty seventh parliament as the member for Renfrew North. My constituency is a rather large one from a geographical point of view, stretching some six miles north from the town of Renfrew along the Ottawa river to within four miles of Mattawa. It is bordered on the south and west by Renfrew South and part of the Algonquin park. In the north it borders the riding of Nipissing. The southern end of the riding is largely a farming community, forest products playing a big role in the economy of the remainder of the riding. The upper Ottawa valley in general has not prospered during the recent economic boom in Canada to the extent that would even begin to compare with certain other areas in Canada. Promotion of industry and incentives to encourage industries are needed urgently if the upper Ottawa valley is going to grow and expand in the years to come. We are fortunate in having the military camp at Petawawa, the Atomic Energy plant at Chalk River, the townsite of Deep River, Dominion Magnesium and Light Alloy at Haley Station, Steel Equipment Limited, Canada Veneer and other wood industries to provide employment and strength for the community at Pembroke.

● (8:10 p.m.)

However, these industries deserve much improved conditions if we expect them to remain loyal to the area in which they are now located. It would be most desirable, even essential, that this government make an offer of a large grant to the Ontario government Department of Highways for the immediate