

Motion Respecting House Vote

orders which, for eight days now, have not allowed us to solve a very simple matter, are obsolete and should be changed as soon as possible. For eight days now, the country and the house wonder whether or not the government has the confidence of the house.

This, of course, is not the time—

[*English*]

Mr. Nugent: You have no doubt about whether the government has the confidence of the people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Trudeau: The question of whether our standing orders which provide an eight-day debate on a parliamentary question, when we live in a century and in an age where decisions must be taken much more rapidly, not only on behalf of the nation but also on behalf of justice—

Mr. Lambert: You are distorting the question.

Mr. Trudeau:—an answer should be found to that question. In short, the question is quite simple. We have to know, Mr. Speaker, if the government should continue to govern or should call an election.

It is a question to which we have the right to get an answer. It is especially a question to which the Canadian people have a right to get an answer.

Two opinions prevail. It is the opinion of the opposition that, last Monday, we lost the confidence of the house. It is our opinion that we did not lose it.

The Leader of the Opposition has quoted authorities. He referred in particular to the 1963 election where the question of confidence had been clearly put, and where the word confidence appeared in the motion introduced at that time and in the proposed amendments. He also quoted from the Canada Year Book.

• (4:40 p.m.)

We have quoted certain authorities to the contrary, not the *l'Almanach Beauchemin*, but prominent parliamentary authorities.

Whether or not the government is justified, whether or not the opposition is justified to take that position, such is the matter before us and it is quite simple. Now, who must answer that question? Must we seek an answer in the standing orders, the tradition or the constitution?

An hon. Member: The people of Canada.

Mr. Trudeau: Is it in the constitution of the country? Certainly not.

[*Mr. Trudeau.*]

It has already been established that the constitution only mentions that an election must be held every five years. We are well within that limit.

Is it you, Mr. Speaker, who must decide that quite simple question? The answer, of course, is no. The Speaker is only asked to be the spokesman of the house. When the house speaks out clearly in compliance with standing orders, the Speaker must act as its interpreter. When the rules are challenged, the Speaker must settle the matter. Therefore, it is surely and obviously not up to the Speaker to decide whether or not the government has the confidence of the house, because it would empower him to call an election or not to do so. It is clear, therefore, that the house should not turn to you, Mr. Speaker.

Is it the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) or the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) who should answer that question? If the Leader of the Opposition were called upon to answer it, we would certainly be the first to call this a dictatorship. It is not up to a particular man, convinced of the soundness of his opinion, to express the will of the house.

Cromwell has been quoted. That is a rather suspect authority, since he is a man who dissolved parliament several times and finally established a dictatorship. Those are not words which should be put in the mouth of a parliamentarian.

In this respect, I am surprised that the leader of the New Democratic party (Mr. Douglas) should have had so little imagination that he had to repeat the same quotation twice. It seems to me that parliamentary history is rich enough to allow one not to repeat these clichés, particularly when their author is a dictator.

Therefore, it is not up to the Leader of the Opposition nor up to the Prime Minister to answer this question, for this would give them the authority of a dictator. In fact, they would then be able to overrule the house. This would be tantamount to holding parliament in contempt. To force a man to answer this very simple question is, in fact, to put him in a dictatorial position.

I heard the hon. member of Kamloops (Mr. Fulton) say that it is the people. That is exactly what we should ask ourselves. Each time the government loses a vote, should we go to the electorate? That is precisely what some hon. members claim. I tell you that if it were the logic of the rules, if it were in the spirit of the constitution, we would have to call elections all the time and, on the other