REQUEST FOR CALLING OF GENERAL ELECTION

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): The Prime Minister, as is his custom, has quoted selectively from the rule—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: —and conveniently ignored the statement of principle that the question cannot be before two public bodies at the same time. He refuses—

An hon. Member: Parliament is supreme.

Mr. Clark: —to answer my question. Someone behind him says "Parliament is supreme." Last night in London, when his Minister of Justice was lobbying the British on a matter still before this House, the minister said that the people of Canada are supreme and, if they do not like what the government is doing with its constitutional resolution, then they can throw this government out at the next election.

The Prime Minister knows that his constitutional proposal was not discussed during the last election. He knows he has no mandate for the constitutional proposal he is trying to push through this House of Commons.

● (1420)

Let me ask the Prime Minister of Canada, if he believes that the people of Canada have a right to throw a government out because it pushes forward a constitutional position the people do not agree with, will the Prime Minister of Canada call an election now on the question of the constitutional resolution?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: Scrape up your courage, Pierre!

Madam Speaker: Order, please. This is quite early in the question period for my having to get up to call order constantly.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I did not think the Leader of the Opposition would use a debate on the future of the Constitution of Canada, use this device to prop up his leadership which has been withdrawn from him.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Call the election!

Mr. Andre: Spineless!

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I am glad to respond to that challenge. Let us—

An hon. Member: Yes or no!

Mr. Trudeau: Let us pass this bill in all stages—

An hon. Member: No, no! Let's have it now!

Mr. Trudeau: They do not want to hear this challenge.

An hon. Member: Put it to the people first.

Mr. Trudeau: Let us pass this bill in all stages, both Houses of Parliament, let us send it to Britain, and then let us call an election.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: After the fact.

Mr. Trudeau: The people will obviously be called, one day or another, to judge this action by this House. I suggest that if hon. members opposite are so sure that the people would not support this—

Mr. Andre: You place your bets before the starting gates open, not after the race is finished.

Mr. Trudeau: They are afraid to answer my challenge of passing this bill, and then—

An hon. Member: You coward.

An hon. Member: Bill Davis did it last week.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Bill Davis won on it last week!

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Will the hon. members please let the Right Hon. Prime Minister finish his answer?

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): I think he is finished. He is finished now!

Mr. Trudeau: As to the referral to the rule, Madam Speaker, I read the end of the paragraph: "the question cannot be put before two public bodies at the same time." That is repeating my point made earlier. Who has referred a bill to the Supreme Court of Canada? If the Government of Canada had referred such a bill, then indeed it would not make much sense for the Government of Canada to press forward with this bill in front of the House. This is the obvious common sense meaning of this rule, and if the—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: —if the opposition does not agree with the common sense meaning of this, let them appeal to the Speaker. She is entitled to rule on whether this bill is properly before the House or not.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister speaks about leadership. I am prepared to face votes, as he is not.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: The Prime Minister knows that he has no mandate for what he is trying to do.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!