

Fisher's Hard Attack Impresses Members



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OTTAWA — It doesn't often happen, but when it does, it's truly a spectacle.

And a formidable one.

Like a tank, the Lakehead's maverick New Democrat, Douglas Fisher, that MP-of-many-trades, rumbles to his feet and rolls over the Government, Cabinet Ministers and Backbenchers alike, crushing them to silence.

He's a great bull moose of a man with a booming voice to match that he can make drip like acid or use as a brutal club.

He gears up and rolls out only once a Session, but it's something to see and remember, for this Man-Who-Moves-Like-a-Tank leaves the Government benches, front and back, flattened and stunned.

Like nobody else, not even "Fighting John" Diefenbaker, he can do it.

He did it on the Budget last year, and the Government in general and Finance Minister Walter Gordon in particular still haven't fully recovered from his explosive disclosure that a trio of Bay Street Boys had written much of that politically disastrous Federal balance sheet.

And now he's done it again on that epic of epics, "Mr. Pearson," or a Day in the Life of the Prime Minister.

It was nothing less than cruel.

For with brutal skill, he brought to vivid life that old ghost of "arrogance" that did so much, only eight years ago, to destroy another Liberal Government.

This time he has dressed the old ghost of arrogance in a new and hideous costume: "The Divine Right to Govern."

Just sample Fisher in Hansard:

"They think they are administrative geniuses."

"They think they Know-How-To-Handle-Things, but all they can do is everlastingly flub."

All this in a voice saturated with scorn.

Then:

"Although I do not feel sorry, I do have sympathy for a lot of Liberal Backbenchers who have to sit there and watch the finicky perambulations of the Cabinet, as they see one Minister after another getting into trouble, right from the Budget of last year down to this last and silliest of things."

All this in deep, if mock sorrow.

And finally:

"They don't like criticism. They simply can't stand it. They haven't got the skin for it. When they were over there (in the Opposition) you could not stop them. They were in there knifing. But once in power again, and they want to get back to those good old pre-1957 days, warm, with Blair Fraser (of Maclean's Magazine) pouring all those honey phrases on them about this greatest collection of talent in Canadian history. Haw, haw, haw."

And this last in laughing contempt.

DOWN TO EARTH

Off the destructive theme of the "Divine Right," Fisher had some other devilishly damaging phrases.

His description of Tom Kent, the Prime Minister's \$25,000 "Co-ordinator of Programming" (not CBC) made even that usually coolly aloof Brain Truster, sitting there in the Commons Galleries, squirm in a torture of embarrassment. The "unctuous" Tom Kent, grinned Fisher with malicious delight, was enchantingly entertaining in the way he "Uriah Heap-ishly mothers the poor Prime Minister."

Through all this and more—as has been happening day after incredible day, the Government Frontbench sat silent, the Cabinet seemingly crushed to a stunned insensibility, by the weight and power of The-Man-Who-Rumbles-Like-a-Tank.

When it was done, there were Conservatives who mourned that it was too bad Fisher, spreading his talents too wildly, didn't have more time to be the Great Parliamentarian that towers over the Commons but once a Session.

Fisher, with a full head of power and all guns blazing, could well smash a Government single-handed, if he could maintain that destructive drive of those single super-charged assaults.

It was so impressively overwhelming that Jack Horner, that plain-spoken, down-to-earth cowboy MP from Alberta, looking, unbelieving, at the silent Government benches, could only murmur incredulously:

"What gutless wonders—and that includes the Cabinet and that gutless bunch of backbenchers over there. No guts. Just no guts."

And still they sat, silent; shaking their heads as if they were just regaining consciousness after a viciously severe beating—which, perhaps, they were.