

Procedure and Organization

views, I do agree that they will make unusually fine parliamentarians.

One of them, the hon. member for Sudbury (Mr. Jerome), in a moment of great exhilaration, said in effect that the committee system has been wonderful, that it has revealed the kind of trickeries of government. We now know, said the hon. member, what otherwise we would not have known.

Those of us who have been here for years have a deep and abiding affection for this institution and do not want to see it destroyed. We want to see it made strong and effective, but not by telling the opposition in effect that they have four days to discuss a certain matter and must go to it. That is an old threat.

I remember when the former prime minister, Mr. Pearson, tried to explain away in this house the sterility of the programs that he had brought before parliament. He said that had he had a similar rule to this present proposal he would have been able to do so much. I should like to ask the government what they would do with this power. Efforts to curtail parliamentary power have been characteristic over the years. History proves that autocracy and dictatorships are shadows that forever stand in the wings of parliament.

I should like some minister to tell us what the government are going to do when they get this power. Where are these strong men that form the government? Where is the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Sharp)? Where is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson), that wizard on financial matters? What action are these people taking today? With this rule would they have taken any action to forestall the increase to its highest point of the cost of living in this country? Would they have taken action to ensure that the western farmer would not be in the position he now is, with the economy going down and down and retail sales disappearing on every hand? I think sales have slumped 13 per cent during the last six months.

What does the one per cent to which reference has been made mean? Nobody knows. Ministers do not speak, they sit—if they are here. One would expect ministers to rise in their place to defend this proposal. But no; except for one or two speeches there has been silence. I should like to hear from the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must interrupt the right hon. gentleman as his time has expired.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Some hon. Members: Continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Is the hon. member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet) not here? The hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth (Mr. Gibson) is a congenial fellow with a knowledge of this parliament that few have. I knew his distinguished father and his distinguished grandfather, and the hon. member is always in the house. I feel more at home seeing him here, and I know he would not say anything to which the government would not want to listen.

So I conclude by asking whether the government intend to bring about the abolition of our parliamentary system. Is the Secretary of State now to be given the opportunity to push through in four days a measure dealing with the abolition of the monarchy? Is this what the government has in mind? There is no question the government could do this under this proposed rule. They have a favourable Senate. In recent years that institution has not shown that independence of which so much is often spoken.

No longer have we a constitution. It can now be amended by a simple vote of the House of Commons and Senate. Would the house leader tell us what he has in mind by his reference to one per cent? This is about the ratio that the legislation introduced bears to the total amount of legislation that should have been introduced by this government. What does the government want to destroy? What is the plan?

Last September the Prime Minister stated that the government would have to find out whether other institutions must take the place of parliament. These days this parliament has an appointment with its own destiny. The question facing it will not be answered by an opposition that grovels and goes on bended knee. Although we are all desirous of taking a vacation let me tell the government they are not going to push this proposal through. What the government has done to this country during the last year has resulted in the greatest fall in support in political history.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Hon. members used to quote Gallup polls when they told a story in their favour. But look what happened in Manitoba. Down went the Liberal party.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.