

Debating Time Allotment

Mr. Lewis:—and by the irrelevant insults of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson).

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lewis: There may have been good reasons why the President of the Privy Council put his motion on the order paper. If there were reasons, I would have sat and listened patiently to the President of the Privy Council for having the decency and the necessary modesty to tell the house why he put his motion ahead of the motion of the chairman of the committee. Instead of that he said: I wanted to put this motion on the order paper. I had the right to do so, and you had better lump it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: That is right.

Mr. Lewis: It is this sort of behaviour that is souring the atmosphere in this parliament. It is this sort of behaviour that is making the people of Canada wonder what this parliament is about. I happen to be a relatively junior member of the house, and I have supported with all the strength I could the notion that the committees of the house should be strengthened and given a more important role. I have made speeches not only in this house but across the country from one end to the other pointing out that the business of parliament has now become so complex, so difficult; that the issues before members of parliament are so numerous that it is impossible for the house as a whole to deal with all of them in the depth they require. The only way to overcome this difficulty is to strengthen the role of committees of parliament, to give them the necessary staff and the necessary status in the proceedings of parliament so that they become the avenues through which these important, complex and difficult issues are discussed and debated in depth.

This is what most of us have hoped for. This is what most of us have believed the committees of parliament ought to become. It is surely the duty of the government, above all, in this house, to see it that the status of those committees is honoured and observed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lewis: In addition to the legislative duty of a government, it is the duty of a government to lead this house; to give the house a program; to see to it that parliament functions in a way which will promote the benefits and welfare of the country and the

[Mr. Lewis.]

worthwhileness of parliament itself. That is the duty of the President of the Privy Council; that is the duty of the government house leader, namely, to assist this house, parliament and its committees to function properly. It is not his duty to step on the work of committees of the house. As I said, there may well have been a good reason why the President of the Privy Council decided that the government ought to put forward a motion to supersede the motion of the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Blair).

● (9:00 p.m.)

Why did he not tell us what those reasons were? If he had humbly said to this house "there are the reasons and I would like to listen to hon. members", it would have been better. But he did not say anything of the sort. He just said that the government wanted to put a notice of motion and therefore they did, no matter what the committee did.

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) has the nerve—and I cannot describe it in any other way—he has the unmitigated gall, to say to this house that what we are dealing with is a motion put on the order paper by a member and that the government should have the authority to put another motion in its place. If he meant it seriously, he was not thinking. If he was thinking, he was being hypocritical.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lewis: I give him the benefit of the doubt, Mr. Speaker, and say that he was thinking. He knows perfectly well that this was not a motion by any member of the house. This was a motion by the chairman of the committee who was instructed by the committee to put that motion on the order paper. What difference does it make how many members voted against or for it? Ever since I have been in this house, I have learned that there is no such thing as a majority report of a committee. I have been in the minority on committees of this house but I have not been able to file a minority report; the rules do not permit me to do that. All I can do is put out a press release and deal with the press outside. If anyone should know this, the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) and the Minister of Agriculture should know, that so far as the house is concerned there is merely a report of the committee—whether it is a majority report or a unanimous report is irrelevant.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Sit down.