

Business of Supply

because of the delays that would result at the hands of members of parliament and parliament itself. I do not think that this is necessarily the result of a lack of will, either on the part of parliament or individual members, to improve the performance of the House. However, I believe there is an essential need to prove to Canadians that parliament is a relevant and dynamic body which, if it does not pass laws like a sausage machine, which it is not supposed to do, at least gives valued consideration of the judgments made by the government, and in due course passes into law or rejects all relevant items.

I think a pretty good example of the problem faced can be demonstrated by the work being performed now in the Committee on National Resources and Public Works. Those of us who are on that committee have been subjected to a wearisome filibuster that is in main caused by a haranguing opposition of the committee. It is a deliberate attempt to prevent parliament from dealing with the issue. After having spent some eight sessions on clause 2 of Bill C-32, it was a matter of great surprise and chagrin to hear one of the members of the committee, I believe the hon. member for York-Simcoe, whine to the committee that we were unable to deal with the estimates of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources because of the constant preoccupation with the Petro-Can bill.

We have not yet passed clause 2 of this bill. Every conceivable attempt at an intervention has been made. Every shade of doubt possessed by hon. members opposite on this committee has been expressed. Despite the recognition of that fact they have persisted in taking up the time of this committee by a filibuster which is doing nothing for the people of Canada, and particularly the people of western Canada who are waiting for this legislation and the establishment of a national petroleum company. The fact is that it is this kind of display of shabby cynicism on the part of opposition members on these committees which creates a doubt in the minds of the Canadian people about the validity and viability of the parliamentary institution.

Rather than spend time chastising the Prime Minister for taking an hour to explain his estimates, and rather than whine about the fact that committees are not able to study the estimates, I suggest that hon. members opposite look into their own hearts and see whether many of the defects they see in the parliamentary process today are caused by their own obstinacy and their own unwillingness to recognize that we have a job to do, and that it will not be answered by the kind of performance we have had today, yesterday, and the day before on the Committee on National Resources and Public Works.

So, Mr. Chairman, I will simply say again that I urge the Leader of the Opposition to release some of the data which his highly priced research staff is grinding out, and to spread it among his colleagues so that we may receive a more enlightened performance from them in days to come.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Chairman, I first want to take the committee into my confidence and advise it that I have tabled with the Chair, and have given to my hon. friend the government House leader, and my friend the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, notice of an amendment which would have the effect of precipitating a vote at the expiration of the allotted time.

We are asking that the Privy Council estimates, Vote 1 in the amount of \$18,484,200, be reduced to \$17,600,000. That represents in round figures the equivalent of an increase of 12 per cent over the same estimates for 1974-75. I hope the significance of that will not have escaped members on the government side because it gives them a chance to put into practice the voluntary restraint of 12 per cent that the Minister of Finance has been talking about.

Without in any way derogating from the capacity and ability of many members of the Privy Council staff, if the confusion, the mess and the problems we see coming out of the Prime Minister's office and the Privy Council office today are an indication of the result of the huge expenditures made, we think it would be a great thing for this country if the estimates were reduced by this amount.

It is not without significance that the people the government has put up so far to debate this matter, with one exception, the hon. member for Mississauga, are hon. members who have been spawned out of the civil service at one time or another. I refer to the government House leader, the hon. member for Argenteuil-Deux-Montagnes, the hon. member for St. Paul's, and one other. Oh yes! How could I have forgotten the Prime Minister? The Prime Minister admitted he had played around the periphery of the public service. He was there just long enough to have gained some of their ingrown defects but not their virtues. The defence put up has been a professional defence by government professionals. I detect a trace, on the part of the government House leader, of a desire to escape from the coils of the civil service which encased him for so long and, if God gives him enough years and if he lectures enough times in this House, he might yet become a reasonably adequate parliamentarian.

Before I get on to asking some questions, Mr. Chairman, I wish to say that much was made by the Prime Minister, during the time he graciously vouchsafed to give us, about the amount of research staff provided to the opposition parties, and I include other opposition parties. However, the Prime Minister conveniently forgot to say that the Liberal caucus receives a grant of \$260,000, and that the departmental expenditures, including the Prime Minister's staff, for salaries and wages total \$3.6 billion. That is what those people over there get.

I say through you Mr. Chairman, to the members of the committee, that that is what they get for doing the kind of work they should be doing in connection with their duties in this House of Commons and elsewhere. Yet the Prime Minister comes in here and whines and whimpers about the amount of money being allowed the opposition parties for research staff. I must say that at first I was a little concerned about the way in which the Prime Minister conducted himself today, after having what I thought was an understanding that he would make a reasonably short statement such as to permit adequate questioning in this House on his estimates. The Prime Minister deliberately took a long time, and showed his contempt for members of this House and parliament. He spoke for an hour and 25 minutes. He did this deliberately so that we would not have an opportunity to question him.

Mr. Stanfield: It was almost fraudulent.