

*Control of Public Funds*

the minister who spoke just before lunch would have us believe, of providing members of the opposition with more opportunities to get information. The minister who uttered those words knows full well that they are not true. Why is there no interest in debate? I can recall when debates of this nature would have almost filled the benches in this chamber. Why is it that there is this lack of interest now? The reason is that there is no effective debating forum here any longer because of the absolute control that the executive, the government, has garnered unto itself.

From 1963 onwards the government has adopted policies which in turn were embraced by the new head of the government in 1968. These policies have gradually weakened and watered down the effectiveness of the opposition, thus resulting in this rather regrettable lack of interest in this chamber. We are no longer effective in this House. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is aware of the lack of interest and he knows he can implement further encroachments upon, and erosions of, the authority of parliament itself and he is doing exactly that. He and his colleagues in government are guilty of further abuses of the parliamentary process which in the end can only make this institution a rubber stamp for the executive authority.

With regard to the committee system, yesterday the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) tried to pass off the committee system and what he called the "reforms" which were implemented in 1968 in the regime of the present Prime Minister as something which have resulted in committees being able to perform their function with a great deal more efficiency than in the past. This, Mr. Speaker, is simply not the truth. I was here before 1963 when estimates were brought into the House and discussed in committee of the whole. I have been here since that time and I have found, even in the minority situation we have this session, that the committee system has been an absolutely useless procedure.

We are told by the President of the Treasury Board that we have more opportunities for access to information. I think he should speak to some of his backbenchers, such as the hon. member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Poulin) who is one of the central leaders in a constant effort to stonewall members of the opposition and keep them from getting information. These members are constantly throwing up barriers of points of order and points of procedure in order to prevent this kind of information from coming out. I see the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik) in his seat and he is one of the biggest offenders.

The committee system is set up to provide the opposition with an opportunity to examine government spending estimates when the estimates are referred to committee. But do we get the information that we want? No, Mr. Speaker, we do not, because hon. members like the hon. member for Ottawa Centre, the hon. member for Ontario, the hon. member for York North (Mr. Danson), the hon. member for Gatineau (Mr. Clermont) and the hon. member for Laprairie (Mr. Watson) are constantly throwing up a barrier by raising spurious points of order and points of privilege in order to—

**Mr. Cafik:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

[Mr. Nielsen.]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Order. The hon. member is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Cafik:** I certainly am, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) happened to refer to me and said the hon. member for Ontario was constantly raising points of order in committee. I should like to suggest that the hon. member does not sit on any committees on which I normally sit and that he certainly cannot make that kind of unfounded allegation, which is totally untrue.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member who has just risen on a point of order has said simply bears out what I have been saying. He has raised a spurious point of order.

**Mr. Cafik:** A further point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** I am sure hon. members know they must not engage in debate between themselves. I will hear the point of order.

**Mr. Cafik:** Mr. Speaker, I quite legitimately feel aggrieved by this unfounded allegation and I certainly have the right, as does any other member of this chamber, to defend myself and my reputation and I intend to do so. I think it is unworthy of the hon. member to make a statement that he knows is unfounded.

● (1500)

**Mr. Paproski:** Why don't you come in tomorrow? We will give you the whole afternoon.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Order, please. Although it is a very serious point of debate I would remind the hon. member that he will probably be the next speaker and can make the point during his speech.

**Mr. Nielsen:** For the second time the hon. member interrupts on a spurious point of order.

**Some hon. Members:** Shame!

**Mr. Nielsen:** I am not going to suggest that the hon. member has no reputation to defend, because obviously he believes he does and I accept his word; but I would have expected him, not only now but during previous debates in this House when similar conduct has occurred, to have shown a little humility, learned from the fact that only four votes separated him from his opponent in the last election. Obviously, he has not learned that humility.

This is the kind of tactic used not only here but in the committee by hon. members on the other side to provide their ministers with the vehicle with which to give members of committees just enough information and no more. They seem to delight in getting away with telling members as little as possible. The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) speaks about providing Members of Parliament with information. He appeared with his officials before the miscellaneous estimates committee where one after the other delighted in circumventing and circumambulating questions, simply to give us as little information as possible. I have spoken about the President of the Treasury Board, but I speak also about the Minister of