

Ministerial contradiction is old stuff in the U.S.A. where the President has the final say. But here in Canada, as in Britain, we have a system wherein the Prime Minister is only the first among other ministers—

The Prime Minister has not heard about that; I guess he has not read this article.

—and cabinet is presumed to be a team that thinks—

Certainly that is a questionable point.

—(and agrees on action) before it urges or acts.

Today's spectacle is absurd and, what is more, makes our system appear absurd. If Greene and Chrétien win then Kierans is made to look a dunce and his judgment on other matters becomes suspect. Or vice-versa. There may be dunces in this cabinet—

I should like to debate that point, Mr. Chairman, but it is not relevant at the moment.

—as in others, but it helps nothing to have the Prime Minister encourage them in the name of freedom of speech and thought to go about running off at the mouth.

**The Chairman:** Order, please. The Chair has been lenient with the hon. member because I thought all hon. members would want him to finish the editorial, but I must inform him that his time expired about 30 seconds ago. If there is unanimous consent, the hon. member may continue.

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Baldwin:** I thank the committee for its courtesy; hon. members know how infrequently I speak. I simply ask them to think of the terrible situation we would have with 50 ministers of the Crown, all of them engaged in these antics that have been so adequately described by this highly responsible newspaper in the editorial to which I have referred. Where would the people be in such a situation? What would they think? Who would they believe? I suggest this would be a catastrophic situation, one that this poor country should not be asked to face.

I should like to close by reading from one other article which I think is indicative of what would be the mental condition of so many of my hon. friends on the other side if they were ministers of state, ministers of state without a department of state or parliamentary secretaries. They would not know what they were doing or saying. This article is as follows:

The Texas House of Representatives has unanimously passed a resolution endorsing the job performed by the Boston Strangler in the field of population control.

The resolution submitted by two representatives who believed the Texas House would pass any resolution set in front of its members—

This is the sort of situation we would face. I do not think my hon. friends opposite would go quite that far. I give them credit for stopping somewhat short of that.

**An hon. Member:** Don't fool yourself.

**Mr. Baldwin:** One of my hon. friends behind me says I would be fooling myself. He may have better judgment than me. This is the situation we would face with 50

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ministers of the crown and 29 parliamentary secretaries trying to govern this poor, unfortunate country. This is one of my reasons—I have a few others yet—for saying we must not allow this bill to pass.

**Mr. Drury:** Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether the hon. gentleman would allow a question.

**Mr. Baldwin:** I would be delighted.

**Mr. Drury:** I ask him which two members of the opposition prepared the articles from which he quoted.

**The Chairman:** Order, please. It being ten o'clock, it is my duty to rise, report progress and request leave to sit again at the next sitting of the House.

Progress reported.

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### PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

#### EXTERNAL AFFAIRS—DISBANDING COMMONWEALTH COMMITTEE ON INDIAN OCEAN SECURITY—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT

**Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough):** Mr. Speaker, on March 8 I inquired regarding Canada's views as to the status and prospects of the Commonwealth committee on security in the Indian Ocean which had been established at the Singapore conference of Prime Ministers. At the time of its establishment there was a tendency in some quarters to regard it as a major achievement. There were accolades for the Prime Minister of Canada, and this country was selected as one of the members of the committee.

My question sought to elicit the views of the government on their present attitude towards this ill-starred emanation of the Singapore conclave. My mystification as to what Canada now thinks stems from the reply of the minister who said, "We considered that it was a useful initiative and we still think so. However, I am satisfied that the committee will not meet." This latter comment is hardly in the category of rash predictions. But surely there must be a more effective way of dealing with the matter than merely waiting around until so many members drop off that nothing numerically significant is left.

Diplomacy may not welcome an excess of definiteness, but possibly this newly developed machinery for Commonwealth consultation might be used to put the whole matter in true perspective, rather than have this wearisome, withering-away process. I fear we have been too much given to façade building on many matters such as the South African arms issue. If there is really nothing being done nor to be done, it is really helpful to give the impression that something efficacious is in progress or in prospect?

• (10:00 p.m.)

Along with an air of unreality there has been, in connection with South African arms sales, a regrettable