

Proposal for Time Allocation

the country by regulation, order in council and decree.

We do not know what the government intends to do. The suggestion is made that there will be structural changes and important, fundamental and basic alterations. It is incumbent on the government to bring to this house before those changes are made the decrees, regulations and orders in council containing its proposals.

We are the most medieval, antedeluvian, anachronistic member of the democratic nations of the Commonwealth in our approach to this matter. Most countries, and I refer to Australia in particular, conduct themselves differently. In most Commonwealth countries nearly all orders in council and most regulations are brought back to the House of Commons for consideration or revocation.

I recognize that governments must have power, mobility, the right to move quickly, and flexibility. But hand in hand with that must go the right of this house and of parliament to check, to examine, to scrutinize and, where essential, to revoke and rescind orders in council and decrees. That principle is involved in this measure. I wanted to enter the debate last Monday, during the committee stage, but because so many members wanted to participate I could not. I wanted to propose what I thought was a suitable compromise—not along the lines of that suggested by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, but in many ways similar. I put this to the minister for his consideration—and I asked a question of the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam earlier embracing this suggestion. Let the bill pass, but add to section 6 (1) a provision that any proclamation in any way affecting the separate identity of the army, navy and air force shall not be effective until it comes back to this house, accompanied by the regulations or statements containing the exact proposal which the government seeks to introduce. At present we do not know what that is. The government asks us for *carte blanche*—for a blank cheque. That is dangerous, and we have had far too much of that.

Let me give an illustration. The President of the United States sought sanction for what is known as the Tomkin resolution, giving the executive power to increase the armed forces under varying circumstances to take care of the situation in Viet Nam then existing. This was to be done without any declaration of war. I am convinced from what I have read

and from the people I have talked to—members of the United States Congress and Senate—that the members of those bodies would never, under any circumstances, have endorsed this request of the president and given the executive the authority under which the escalation of the war in Viet Nam has come about.

In a different way this is what the minister and the government are asking us to do. They want a blank cheque. They say: "We are the great white father, benevolent, all wise, all seeing; trust us; trust our discretion. The changes we make will be good; they will be helpful; the country needs them."

I have not that much trust in any government.

Mr. Nesbitt: Particularly not in this one.

Mr. Baldwin: And particularly not in this government, which has a predilection, because some of its members on the treasury benches have had experience in the civil service, to realizing the benefits arising from repairing mistakes in the dark, without ever bringing them to the light of day.

I say this to the minister: Many of our difficulties date back to the reasonable request that this bill be sent, before second reading, to a committee. Many of the problems which have been generated, many of the difficulties which have occurred can be traced back to the refusal on that occasion. Had the minister agreed to that request I should have been perfectly happy with an order allocating time. That was when the minister ought to have acted. He should have sent this matter to the committee on national defence.

Had the minister done so I submit that it would not have been necessary for the opposition to press certain changes; the government would have suggested them. The government would not have taken the hard position it has since taken, and from which it is unable to move.

Because of these things, though I have had grave reservations about the course of this debate, I cannot in conscience say that the government's action now is wise or necessary.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, like others I regret the impasse reflected in the motion that is before the house for debate and decision today. Even so, I suggest that this day is not a dead loss. It has been good for us to take a hard look at some of our procedures. Indeed, I dare to hope that the debate that has taken place