

and the same privilege of knowing exactly what is going on.

Mr. Chairman, facing this problem the government would like to have all this done through exceptional measures, either by proclamation, after receiving general authorization from the House of Commons. This is what a vote in favour of clauses 14 to 18 will mean—blanket authority granted to the government to act as it pleases through delegation of powers.

Mr. Chairman, we would grant the government the over-all authorization it seeks if it were willing to proceed, as it should, in the establishment and administration of these ministries, by telling us in what definite fields they will operate, but this answer is not given to us.

Mr. Drury: It cannot be given, Mr. Chairman.

• (9:20 p.m.)

Mr. Fortin: If we were given this answer, Mr. Chairman, we would certainly be in a position to co-operate. But we cannot go blindly on.

In view of this uncertainty and the dark in which we are kept, I cannot agree. This is why, Mr. Chairman, I want to express my fierce opposition to the fact that Parliament keeps on delegating its authority to the executive, because we do not know just how far this government will ask us to go and how far we will actually go.

Mr. Chairman, there must be a balance between the executive, legislative and judicial powers. The legislative power is increasingly delegating its authority to the executive to enable it to work more effectively. However, it is not proven that this system of delegation of power really serves the interests of the people of Canada.

Mr. Chairman, we now have a government of technocrats, of specialists and scholars instead of a human government. We have a government which constantly increases the number of inquiry commissions, departments, agencies, ministries—in fact, there are more than 80 of them—and appointments, ostensibly to bring the people to participate in the administration of the state. Unfortunately, the people participate less and less, and I shall give a very specific example to this effect.

One day, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) rose and told the House: The government has just published a white paper on tax reform, which is going to change the whole tax structure and system. He said also that this white paper was published to obtain the views of the people. He said: We will take into consideration the views that will be expressed, the people will have an opportunity to submit their views to the government.

The days went by and some opposition members asked the Minister of Finance whether he was hearing from many Canadians and whether their views were favourable ones. The minister contented himself with rising, smiling while rocking back and forth and resuming his seat as usual. An opposition member rose and asked the same question. The Minister of Finance then gave the following answer: The opposition would like very much to know how popular the Liberal party is in Canada.

Government Organization Act, 1970

That, Mr. Chairman, is the kind of attitude that proves the government does not really want more participation in the formulation of legislation, in the administration of the common weal. It is an excellent purpose, Mr. Chairman, to want more participation by the people in the formulation of legislation, and that is not what I blame the government for.

Mr. Chairman, my concern about these ministries of state, and I have said so again—

Mr. Béchard: And you are going to say so once more.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Chairman, if only the Parliamentary Secretary would stop disturbing me.

Mr. Béchard: He does not disturb much!

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Chairman, if a crisis should occur in a particular field,—I would not want it to happen,—and should a ministry of state serve as a pretext to the government to do nothing, to hide its inability to get things done, would the government be able to say what could happen?

What does the government do when it is faced with a problem? It creates a Royal Commission of Inquiry and the results are nil. Nothing happens.

We would like to know how far these ministries of state can go. What authority will they have? In what way will they differ from other departments established through the normal legislative procedure?

Mr. Chairman, as long as we do not obtain clear and fair answers to these questions, the government has no right to suggest that the opposition is filibustering, because we are convinced that we are doing our work as members of this House, which is to ask the government to account for public expenses.

The President of the Privy Council may well tell us later that hon. members can easily exercise such control through the question period and the annual reports of departments and agencies.

Mr. Chairman, since I was elected to this House, I put more than 300 questions on the Order Paper about the management and status of Crown corporations and I made in this way a detailed study on the control exercised by Parliament over these corporations. Today, I can tell the President of the Treasury Board that, according to the findings of that study, parliamentarians have less and less control over Crown corporations.

Mr. Chairman, it can easily be proved that control by Parliament over Crown corporations has become non-existent, and that its control over departmental administration is only bluff, since we are only informed of what the government wants us to know.

I have asked, for instance, for the production of papers concerning the Department of Public Works, with regard to the construction of a federal building in Victoriaville, which the Liberals have been promising since 1952. I have had that notice of motion put on the order paper in October and it was only a year and some months later that the papers, although not all of them, were provided.