

Supply

see that happening. I hope there will be more of that and that we can carry on in that spirit in the parliamentary committee.

However, let me suggest that an approach of this kind can lead to at least two results. One would be a more extensive participation by elected Members of Parliament in the formulation of public policy. Personally, I see no reason why we should not prefer the public judgment of elected people to the private judgment of appointed public servants.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: I recommend that the government House leader and his colleagues most seriously consider this second point. I believe this would create a much more positive attitude toward the work of governing on the part of hon. members on all sides of this House. I am not speaking here of the role of government. There is no doubt that some of my colleagues, and perhaps I myself, would act most quickly to introduce sunset laws and other pieces of legislation which would reduce the scope of government. I am speaking here of the work of governing. There is no doubt that one consequence of frustration in this House is that many members on all sides feel that they cannot contribute to it so they should stop it. There is no doubt that that is an attitude which has taken root in this House of Commons. There is no doubt that it is wrong and against the generally positive nature of most of the people who are elected here.

I believe that if individual Members of Parliament were given much more opportunity to play a larger role in the formulation of public policy, then the government's problems with respect to getting bills through would diminish. The question of time would not be as contentious as it is now. I believe that if we give Members of Parliament from all parties positive things to do, they will concentrate on doing positive things and will not be interested in finding nits to pick. Instead, they will be concentrating their efforts on ways in which to advance the public interest of the country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: We are not speaking here entirely theoretically. A preceding government to this one, a Liberal government, allowed Members of Parliament to help formulate an immigration bill and, indeed, allowed public hearings across the land. That was a highly complex bill which, if my memory serves me correctly, passed through this House in four days, despite its complexity, because Members of Parliament and the people of Canada had been involved in its formulation. They had a chance to speak on the content of the bill, not simply to say "yea" or "nay" at the end. That is a model for the future, in my view.

Sir, the events of the last few weeks have been unusual only in degree. It was the first time that a government had sought to act on such an omnibus measure. It was the first time an opposition had used the bells that way. However, the issue has been building for a long, long time. Our system has been changing for a long time, gradually giving more power to

governments and parties and gradually limiting the rights of Parliament, the rights of private members and of the people we all represent. If that continues we will waste the talent of the hon. members who serve here, lose the trust of the people who sent us here and gradually erode our democracy. We cannot let that happen.

We are here to pass good laws and to prevent bad ones; but we are also here to protect the symbol and the instrument of democracy in a free country. Suddenly, in a way which no one could foresee, large numbers of the Canadian public have become aware that there is something wrong in Parliament. They know that the people with power will not listen and that the people who listen cannot act. They want this institution renewed and they count on us to renew it. I believe that the great majority of hon. members in all parties in the House genuinely want a Parliament which is both democratic and effective. I hope we will seize this opportunity to begin that most basic reform.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I feel that the motion presented by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) should be seen against the background of the events of the past few days, and I should like to start by congratulating my colleagues on the government side who, during the past two weeks, have made it abundantly clear that they respect Parliament by remaining available throughout this time to enable Parliament to function and to continue to exist, despite the attempt to degrade this institution. They have shown that it is possible to resolve an unprecedented situation through purely parliamentary means, in a truly dignified manner, without giving in to blackmail.

● (1600)

So, first of all, I want to pay tribute to those who, in traditionally Liberal fashion, continued to support the institution of Parliament throughout the unfortunate events that took place during the last two weeks. Mr. Speaker, I feel that since I only have a few minutes to speak to the motion presented by the Leader of the Opposition, it is my duty to clarify once more the circumstances in which the hon. member is proposing parliamentary reform. Subsequently, I shall try to suggest several possibilities for bringing about a number of very desirable changes in our institution. Finally, I shall give other members of the House a chance to cover other aspects of the subject and formulate their own suggestions, because I fully intend to take note of any positive proposals that may be made today in the course of this debate.

Mr. Speaker, during the last two weeks, Parliament was prevented from functioning by abusive means that have never been used before in all of the 115 years that Parliament has existed in Canada. The bells that rang for 16 days have existed for 115 years, and never, not even in recent years under Mr. Stanfield or even under Mr. Diefenbaker, has an opposition