

Government Organization Act, 1970

quite a different angle. I am going to suggest that the backbenchers on both sides of the House do not do their work properly. If they did, then I believe that the backbenchers of this House have the power, under your able leadership, Mr. Speaker, to discipline the treasury benches, and through them the Prime Minister himself.

In 1939 and 1940 we had an example of what happened when the back benchers of England, and through them the cabinet ministers, failed to discipline their prime minister. The excuse for this is always the same, of course—that since the prime minister has final say he must be given a great deal of leeway in choosing his cabinet, and so on. The Prime Minister must have the power of going to any corner of the realm to pick those men who can best serve their country. In the final analysis, his judgment is a human one.

In our parliamentary system we take from the ranks of the people certain men of various occupations and backgrounds to lead the country. But the process does not end there. It is only now, some 30 years after the event, that I have been given the answer, and perhaps fortuitously no later than this morning, as to why Mr. Neville Chamberlain, the then prime minister of England, was so incapable of leading that country. The answer is plain and simple: he lacked not only certain knowledge, but he absolutely refused to take advantage of the advice of those men who were close to him who did have the knowledge, the ability and the courage to lead Britain. One of these men, whom I need hardly mention, in parliament at that time was one Winston Churchill, who for most of his life was a backbencher. However, his contribution as a backbencher was so outstanding that when nobody else in England had the ability to get the country out of the hole it was in as a result of wishful thinking and high-sounding ideals but with complete disregard for human nature and the facts of history, they reached into the back benches to bring out Mr. Churchill over and over again.

At the height of his power, although he always made decisions himself—and strong they were—and although he gave leadership such as we have seldom seen in any democratic country, he remained open to persuasion by those around him. He very rarely, if ever, marched out into the forum of the world to make big decisions affecting not only his country but the future of mankind without at least having had full consultation.

That is a lesson not too far back in history which I think we would do well to remember today. As I have said, I am not going to presume to tell the Prime Minister how to do his job. But I do suggest that every backbencher of this House should do his job, namely, to see that the government and its policies fit the needs of the people. If they do not, then if necessary members should have the courage to regroup, not up-country preaching revolution and growing radishes but in their own caucus in Ottawa. If we cannot persuade those in authority in our own caucus, then we should find a caucus where we can. We have had one or two examples of great courage in this House, and I think the results have been, and will continue to be, very salutary.

[Mr. Bigg.]

It is not sufficient for ministers of the Crown to point to hon. members on this side, as they have done during the past year, and to say that they get no leadership from the opposition. Let me assure them that if they show us leadership and reorganize for better government, then they will get all the support they want, and perhaps a great deal more than they can sell to the treasury benches and to their own leader. I do not want to be negative and am not going to spend the few minutes at my disposal being negative. But I do want to remind the House that one or two other mistakes have been made that I think should not have been made. Let me tell these ministers—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I apologize to the hon. member, whose speech is very interesting—and I do not want to put him off stride—but it does seem to me that in the last few minutes he got rather carried away and forgot that he should address his remarks to the Chair.

• (3:50 p.m.)

Mr. Bigg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did not intend to direct my remarks to the House in any other manner. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I beg the members of the government not to repeat what I think are errors in the approach to governing in general. This has been the cause of what might appear to be a lack of co-operation from this side of the House.

In the second paragraph of the press report of the speech of the President of the Treasury Board there is the suggestion that the best answer to this apparent riddle lies in a strengthening of the parliamentary institution. Parliament has only one big stick. Once people have made their choice of a political party—that is how we are elected and I do not quarrel with this at the present time—and once we have elected an executive, there is only one way that Parliament, including the backbenchers on both sides of the House, can control what may be a well-meaning executive which is getting out of line and does not have the confidence of this whole House.

The only control we have over such an executive is monetary control. If we are to preserve any parliamentary control whatsoever, we must maintain monetary control. If there is no control, we have no democracy and the whole riddle will be solved once and for all. If we are to maintain this system, as I am sure all of us want to do, we must stop what we have been doing openly. Had we lost this right of monetary control accidentally, we might be able to excuse ourselves. Six years ago we gave up our Easter recess in order to debate the dangers of allowing Vote 15, which I think we all remember, of becoming a means whereby the executive could sidestep Parliament and raise salaries. At page 10003 of *Hansard* for November 17, 1966, just four and a half years ago, I indulged myself in a little prophesying. Let me quote what I said then:

—I do not know why the vote could not be increased to \$500 million next year in order to get around the power of Parliament.