

*Interim Supply*

Gordon Moore was 100 per cent correct in his comments about the seating plan, which showed the government consisted of cabinet ministers and nobody else, though occasionally the whip has been shown inside the little black box which designates people who have been called—I prefer to use the word “called” rather than “chosen”, but you might call them the chosen few. There used to be fewer than there are now; today there are 26 of them in the house. Anyway, this little black fence went around the chosen few who were labelled “The Government”.

I directed a memorandum to the Prime Minister setting out Gordon Moore's comments on the situation, indicating that the seating plan showed the government consisted of the members of the cabinet and nobody else. I also made the comment that people who worked hard in constituencies to elect a majority of members so that an effective government could be formed were certainly disappointed to learn that their efforts were in vain if they did not elect a cabinet minister.

The next point I made in the memo was the suggestion that the ministry be designated as “The Ministry”, and that those who support the ministry be designated as “The government party”. I then had a visit from our very good friend, the hon. member for York Centre, who at that time was chief government whip. He came to me with my original memo which I had addressed to the Prime Minister, and up in the corner in handwriting was written: “Jimmy, R.B. raises a point that sounds as though it has some merit. Talk to him and see if this should not be rewritten”.

I spoke to the hon. member for York Centre for a few moments, and he spoke to the then Speaker of the House of Commons and almost immediately thereafter there was a change in the written portion of the seating plan of the House of Commons in that in front of the seats of the ministers appeared the statement “The Ministry”. Then in the written body of the plan appeared an expression for which I would like to give full credit to the Prime Minister, to the hon. member for York Centre as well as to the Speaker of the day, the former hon. member for Mount Royal. I do not know which of these gentlemen was responsible for rewording the seating plan, but in the ones that are handed out today—in fact, a new one came out this afternoon—you will find this sentence:

To the right of Mr. Speaker sit the Prime Minister, his ministers and other members of the government party (Liberals).

I should like to point out that when we receive our calls to caucus, which meets nearly every Wednesday and sometimes more frequently, we still have the amusing notice that the supporters of the government are called to meet at such and such a place. I often wonder what the supporters are called, Mr. Chairman. The supporters of the government are asked to meet in a certain place. I do not know why the call could not refer to members of the government party, as is the case in the House of Commons seating plan; but then, Mr. Chairman, there are many things which go on in the House of Commons that perhaps one will never understand.

I give the committee this little episode in House of Commons history for one reason in particular. I wish to point out that the Prime Minister must agree that the cabinet is not the government. If he held to the belief that the cabinet is the government, he would not have changed the wording of the seating plan going on four years ago to the point where the cabinet is today referred to in the seating plan as “The Ministry”, and the members of the Liberal party are referred to as “members of the government party (Liberals)”. If in the seating plan the ministry is called the ministry, why cannot the cabinet be called the cabinet when it makes some announcement to this, that or the other effect?

Members on the government side of the house are everlastingly hearing on the radio or picking up newspapers and reading about the government announcing this, the government announcing that; that the government is doing one thing and has decided not to do another thing. It is the government that is making these announcements. Liberal workers come to us and say: “In the name of heaven, you are a member of the government; why did you allow this to go on? What is the matter with the government?” You simply have to say, Mr. Chairman, that you know nothing whatever about the matter, that you read about it in the paper as they did, and that the only information you have is what is vouchsafed in the newspapers, on the radio or on television.

In the book which has been the subject of discussion for some time written by Messrs. Saywell and Ricker, with regard to whom we are endeavouring to ascertain how much of the taxpayers' money the C.B.C. pays to these biased men who write that the printed word cannot be believed because it carries advertisements, whereas the C.B.C. can be believed because they just milk the common taxpayer,