

Motion for Concurrence in Report

body. Parliament has a right which is certainly paramount to the convenience of the Prime Minister. The right to live.

Parliament, he says, has the right to live.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Woolliams: When parliaments die—and they died in Europe in the thirties—freedom dies, and the power of the people to express themselves dies with it. The duty of parliament is to defend itself and to resist the invasion of its rights and privileges. That is why I have risen today, and that is why members of all the opposition parties have made their protests in this regard. I am not against reform. But I, together with my hon. friends, am against the muzzling of parliament and the proposal to deprive parliament of its traditional control over the pursestrings. To continue the quotation:

When the Prime Minister says he speaks for the whole of the country he is mistaking the echo of his words for the voice of the Canadian people. It is parliament which is and must remain the authorized exponent of public opinion and of the public will. The legislation, the policies, must be what this house makes them. Even the government must be what the house makes it.

At that point he was interrupted by an hon. member who said: "That is what it will be." Mr. Lapointe answered:

That is very intelligent; it reminds me of the words of the Greek poet Homer that the gods deprive of half their intelligence those who lose their freedom.

That is exactly what will happen if parliament dies. We are in favour of reform, but remember it has been the characteristic of great nations which have had a long history of continuous creation that they finally failed because subsequent generations failed to comprehend the great institutions which their forefathers had built to guarantee the freedom and liberty of the subject. We in Canada are now faced with a real danger of the loss of parliament and the loss of freedom.

What is parliament? It was Lord Acton who said:

—power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely,

It was once said:

If parliament is to be preserved as a living institution, His Majesty's Loyal Opposition must fearlessly perform its functions. When it properly discharges them, the preservation of our freedom is assured. The reading of history proves that freedom always dies when criticism ends. It upholds and maintains the rights of minorities against majorities. It must be vigilant against oppression and unjust invasions by the cabinet of the rights of the people.

We should bear these words in mind today when we consider the proposal to implement rule 16A and abolish the right of the House of Commons to look into the expenditures of

this nation which represent the total taxes collected from the Canadian people. To continue the quotation:

It should supervise all expenditures and prevent overexpenditure by exposing to the light of public opinion wasteful expenditures or worse. It finds fault; it suggests amendments, it asks questions and elicits information, it arouses, educates and moulds public opinion by voice and vote. It must scrutinize any action by the government and in doing so prevent the shortcuts to the democratic procedure that governments like to make. The absence of a strong opposition means a one party state.

Reform is good, but if the government is allowed to use rule 16A, if it is allowed, under the guise of reform, to take away the right of parliament to look into expenditures which might be extravagant or which might be corrupt, then this institution is through. You might as well lock the doors.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

An hon. Member: Amen.

Mr. Woolliams: Well, it would be "amen" if parliament closed.

An hon. Member: Yea, brother.

Mr. Woolliams: I do not intend to get into any argument with a man who just wants to heckle at a time like this when so many important things are at stake for this institution. The Prime Minister said that every democratic assembly requires some procedure for turning discussion into decision. Nobody argues with that. But let us not turn decision into dictatorship.

Let us consider some examples. We in the opposition have asked for a decision on a new oil policy for Canada because we are losing our oil markets. But we have received no statement of policy and no action has been taken. We have asked for a decision concerning wheat sales and means of expediting the drying of grain. Again, there has been no statement of policy and no action.

We have asked for a decision with reference to the Kennedy round discussions so as to protect our foremost industries in eastern and central Canada. There has been no statement of policy and no action. We have asked for a decision in the field of international affairs in an attempt to discover where this country stands with reference to NATO, NORAD and, indeed Biafra. But there has been no statement of policy and no action. We have asked for a decision as a matter of priority concerning a review of pensions for the aged who are today in dire need, living in