

*Motion for Concurrence in Report*

the rules of this house but instead you are the arbiter of the rules as put forward by the government, and that, I say, is quite wrong.

Having occupied the position that you now so well occupy, Mr. Speaker, I should like to approach the question of rules on the basis of certain general principles. First of all, our system of responsible parliamentary democracy means that the Prime Minister and his cabinet are responsible to parliament and, as part of parliament, to this house. Neither parliament nor this house is to be a mere tool of the cabinet or at the beck and call of cabinet. If anyone wanted to talk about the reform of the parliamentary system I would say to him, let us curtail the power of cabinet and restore power to the members of this house. This is what has been the big problem.

If hon. members would bother to acquaint themselves with what has been going on at Westminster and what is the attitude of the private member there, they would see what I mean. There has been an outrageous growth of cabinet power vis-à-vis parliament. It has now become the mere tool of the cabinet. Let us look at recent writings on the subject of Westminster such as "the legislative process in Westminster" by Mr. S. A. Walkland and a book by Mr. Berkeley, a former member of the British House of Commons, which describe what has happened over there. Yet in a half-digested way we are being asked to pick and choose from the system at Westminster after what I would call shallow and unconsidered thinking has been given to some of the procedures that apply over there.

Second, proceedings in this house must be so conducted that the rights of all hon. members as representatives of the people who elected them and as individuals are protected with scrupulous impartiality and that all members stand before you, Mr. Speaker, as equals, with certain limited exceptions provided for in our rules. These usually have to do with the amount of time that one is allotted in particular debates.

Third, in this house the government has certain rights which must be recognized and protected. A government cannot be forever held at bay and constantly harried and thwarted from fulfilling its recognized task and its responsibility of governing. Having such responsibilities, however, it cannot possess unbridled licence to ride roughshod over the rights of members who are not part of the government. Again I would like to point out to hon. members opposite that outside of those members of the Privy Council they are not members of the government but

are government supporters. The government consists of the members of the cabinet, and all others opposite are private members who possess rights which must be protected. Members sitting in opposition to the government have their undeniable rights which cannot be trampled upon, but in possessing those rights let us recognize that they too have responsibilities toward one another and toward the government.

Fourth, these rights and responsibilities are to be recognized in our rules of procedure wherein they may be enshrined. Such rules must be readily understandable to hon. members—I would hesitate to say they must be understandable by the Chair—and they must lend themselves to effective and ready application by the Chair.

In devising our rules the house must provide you, Mr. Speaker, with an acceptable task. When Mr. Speaker is elected he is asked to accept a charge which must not be impossible. It is the duty of the members of this house collectively to furnish the Chair with effective, workable rules. The Speaker must not be placed in an impossible position. Regrettably, Mr. Speaker, this is not always recognized. All too often procedural proposals are made without thinking or unthinkingly of the consequences as they affect the Chair.

• (3:40 p.m.)

I wish to re-emphasize the opening remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, in particular when he said we are now considering a fundamental issue, perhaps the most fundamental of all, the right of parliament to control itself and in so doing to control the government. I come back again to the theory that in the parliamentary form of democratic government which we enjoy the Prime Minister and the cabinet are responsible to parliament, not parliament responsible to the cabinet. However, in the eyes of the technocrat it all too often appears that legislatures are obstacles to good government. Efficiency, measured by the technocrat himself, is the underlying standard. Critical questioning, alternative proposals and even dissent itself are not acceptable to the technocratic philosophy of government. As my leader said yesterday, we must never dismiss the importance of debate. In so saying we do not subscribe to unlimited debate merely for the sake of debate, merely for frustrating the effective working of parliament. Debate must provide for the adequate discussion of any proposal that is made in this house.

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]