

Information Canada has also been mentioned, although the government has not tied itself down on that. How in the name of heaven can hon. members on the government side say that we are filibustering? How dare they say that? How can they have the unmitigated audacity to say that we should be expected to discharge our responsibility in 2½ days? I will deal later with the very good speech made by the minister.

Within the four corners of clause 14, the government has intimated in no uncertain terms its intention of setting up three, or possibly four, ministries of state which they have identified. There will be at least five, but the government has identified three, and possibly four. The minister talked about the differences between our system and that of the United Kingdom. While we should constantly examine the practice in the United Kingdom in a variety of matters, we in Canada should make our own rules. We should adapt, change and pattern ourselves according to our needs. I do not believe in blind obedience to the practice of the United Kingdom. If members opposite want that, that is up to them. We in this party and other opposition parties believe there is much to be derived from a thorough and constant examination of the British system, but adapted to meet the requirements and needs of Canada.

The minister may be aware that there is a statute in the United Kingdom, passed in 1937, the salaries of ministers act, which deals with more than salaries. It identifies and establishes certain ministries. Although it does not identify them, it provides for a number of secretaries of state. My point is that the United Kingdom Parliament has in fact legislated. My suggestion to a constitutional lawyer opposite would be that having legislated, the prerogative of the Crown has gone, except within the limits of the statute.

The minister attempted to make the very best of a bad case. I think he knows he has a bad case, but I give him credit for trying to put the best face on it. He might succeed. We have been very careful. We have briefed and informed ourselves. We know the weaknesses. I will point some out now. Others in this party will also have something to say about them.

An hon. Member: Again?

Mr. Baldwin: Yes. Now we have a target. For the first time someone has had the courage to stand up and defend this bill. Other members did not have the courage to do that, because they did not understand the bill. The minister has put up a defence. It was as good a defence as he could find for a bad bill or the bad provisions in the bill. I am going to deal with it. The minister had the courtesy of replying to us. He made his best effort to deal with the matter.

We in this House have instituted a new set of Standing Orders. The minister knows about them. Enough has been said about them in our party and other opposition parties. The hon. member for Halifax-East Hants clearly stated his fears about this legislative program. When this legislation is passed, as I assume it will be in due course, the government will be free to exercise the prerogative

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of appointing ministers and establishing ministries of state. For example, there will be a ministry of housing, a ministry to deal with, or at least reply to, questions on issues raised in the report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, and a ministry of state to deal with housing. There is no question about that.

• (9:40 p.m.)

What would be the case without this legislation? What would be the situation? The government would be compelled, as I think it should be, to go to the House and say it had reviewed the situation, exercising its prerogative as the executive, and had reached the conclusion that the housing situation had been allowed to get into such a mess that something needed to be done about it, including the establishment of a ministry.

On this basis the government would then bring in legislation. A recommendation from His Excellency would probably be required, since payment of money for staff, and so on, would likely be involved. A bill would be introduced into the House and would pursue the normal course. Members of this party, members of the Cr ditiste party to my left and supporters of the government who had the courage to express their honest views would do so. There would be a debate. Issue would be joined.

If we on this side felt the government proposals were inadequate, we would put forward counter-proposals; we would offer amendments and the proposals would be studied in detail in committee. I do not think this would take a great deal of time, but there would be an opportunity provided for us on this side to say, "Here are the alternatives". This is what the government proposes to take away from us.

My hon. friend from Halifax-East Hants hinted—I believe he was exercising a kind of poetic licence—that he would like a debate on housing. I believe he was giving expression to the frustration we feel, because we recognize that if this bill is passed in its present form we shall be denied the opportunity to express our views adequately on housing, on science policy or other subjects which might form the basis of the establishment of a ministry of state. This is what we are complaining about. The minister said we shall have our opportunity when the estimates come before us. That is a lovely thing to say, after all the government has done to the House in connection with the scrutiny of estimates. If the changes in the rules had not been made in this regard, the minister might have had a better argument.

Let me digress for a few moments. In the course of my experience in the House, some 14 years, my recollection is that there were never more than three Ministers without Portfolio. The limitation was not imposed by statute but probably followed tradition and custom; no government considered that with 22, 23 or 24 cabinet posts available more than three Ministers without Portfolio should be appointed. But in each instance, with respect to Ministers without Portfolio, there was an item in the estimates dealing with their salaries and, from time to time, with their particular staffs. In accordance with the practice followed then, when dealing with estimates an