

Interim Supply

Mr. Churchill: You have evaded the question, just like your colleagues.

Mr. Mackasey: I suggest that the bill of the hon. member for Carleton would once and for all take out of the House of Commons and the political arena the question of the payroll of the civil servants, who should not be put to this kind of torture as a result of the action of an irresponsible opposition who would hold back their pay another week to the embarrassment of the government because it is in the best interests, they believe, of the opposition.

The opposition could have finished its filibuster last Tuesday or Wednesday. Since that time we have heard nothing but repetition in this debate. The pay of the civil service would have been assured and the civil servant would have received the salary to which he is entitled.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Chairman, is the hon. member going to deal with where and how the money was found?

Mr. Mackasey: None of this would have been necessary had the opposition devoted three, four or five days to the question of unification. We are now on the eleventh day of this debate and we have not even discussed the principle of unification. The opposition have considered it to be more advantageous to them, I suppose, to discuss the character and motives of the Minister of National Defence rather than the principle of unification.

Bill Wilson of the *Montreal Star*, who is one of the more respected members of the press gallery, wrote an excellent article which I commend to all members of the House of Commons, particularly to the former house leader on the other side of the chamber. It is entitled "Constitutional Principles; Filibuster Opens Issue," and appeared in last Saturday's issue. I think it is an objective article and does not side with one party or another. It simply points out some of the constitutional problems which have arisen because of the length of debate and the filibuster to which we have been subjected. I do not want to read it all but I will gladly do so if asked. In comparing the American system with the British parliamentary system the article says:

The crucial difference between the two systems is that in the countries which have borrowed British parliamentary methods, including Canada, the government is responsible directly to the legislature and can be dismissed by it.

The article continues:

Since parliamentary governments can be held accountable by the House of Commons, they have insisted upon keeping a large measure of control of the rights to initiate legislation and control the time of the house so it can secure action on the proposals for which it has to take responsibility...

Prime Minister Pearson, in a Thursday night speech, attempted to make some of the constitutional aspects of the row clear but his arguments on this were lost in his later bombshell—that the government had found enough authorized money to meet its payroll.

I should like to pause here and thank the Minister of National Revenue for having had enough initiative and working so hard to scrape together the money necessary to pay our civil servants. I am thinking of the civil servants who because of the disregard and callousness of the opposition would have been deprived of their pay. I should like to read a little further from this article, and I draw the attention of the members of the opposition to the following words: "The Prime Minister reminded the house that the government had only minority support in parliament." This simply means that if the principle of unification is not in the best interests of this country, that if after prolonged debate on second reading the majority of the House of Commons thinks it is not in the best interests of Canada to unify the armed forces, that majority has an excellent opportunity to join forces and defeat the government. This is one occasion when minority government works to the benefit of the opposition.

• (9.40 p.m.)

Another point made by the Prime Minister which I would emphasize is that even if the unification bill gets through second reading and passes committee stage to third reading, the opposition is not powerless to defeat the bill, particularly since the government is a minority government.

The hon. member for Bow River, a friend of mine, emphasized the role of the opposition very eloquently, as is his custom. He quoted quite extensively from Arthur Meighen, certainly a fine source of opinion. But one of the responsibilities the hon. member did not mention is that the opposition has a responsibility to act on behalf of the Canadian people, and the opposition was not carrying out its mandate last week and again today by spending 11 days trying to force the government to deviate from the normal parliamentary practice of giving second reading to such an important bill and then sending it to committee.