

Procedure and Organization

What is the function of the opposition? Perhaps it is time a few words were said about this. The opposition is not a piece of furniture or a piece of ivory, nor does the opposition want to spend the summer here in order to debate something we know is inherently wrong as far as this institution and as far as Canadians are concerned. What is the major role of the opposition? The opposition has a continuing responsibility of vigilance. It must do the job of checking the government, opposing the government vigorously when necessary with all the tools and ability at its command. What the government is trying to do is take away those tools.

Checking the government is the most obvious task of the opposition. This applies to legislation such as the Criminal Code bill, medicare, and it should apply to measures to increase our taxation. The opposition must prod and push the government into action. Goodness only knows this government needs some pushing! They do not know how to sell wheat; they are losing the oil and industrial markets and they are prepared to lose \$80 million to the automobile industry. I say they have to be pushed.

Mr. Stanfield: They have inflation under control!

Mr. Woolliams: As my leader has said, inflation—

An hon. Member: Which leader?

Mr. Woolliams: Governments everywhere must find a solution to inflation and the housing problem. Who would have thought during the election campaign that interest rates today in the city of Calgary and other major cities in this country would be as high as 10 per cent? Only Benson!

The opposition must be the type to advance policies. What do we mean by that? We recommended in our amendment that the language bill should contain a right of appeal in order to guarantee the civil rights of this nation. We are recommending positive policies, and that is our function. If the government implements this rule, in spite of what the hon. member says about ten days, the government will be able to ram a bill through in four days, so what chance will we have to make any serious recommendations? They do not want to hear the opposition. It just bothers them.

The opposition must advance policies that will persuade the electors that its members

should be on the treasury benches, and therefore, form the government. These members could provide a better government, one that the Canadian people realize would bring about changes. The failure of the opposition to perform these functions will relegate them to the role of the opposition forever. Sir Charles Tupper said:

The duty of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition is to exercise its vast influence in restraining vicious legislation, and in giving a loyal support to proposals of the interests of the country; while initiating itself such measures for the commonwealth as are neglected by the administration.

We have heard many quotations, and perhaps some of them should be referred to again.

Mr. Gibson: Who are your research teams?

Mr. Woolliams: Maybe some Liberal backbenchers should have research teams because all they do is laugh and scoff. They are not interested. The hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth (Mr. Gibson) is just back from another holiday.

Mr. Gibson: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Perrault: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Extensive quotations are being delivered from a document and no source date or page reference has been given. I ask the hon. member to give us details of the document from which he is quoting.

Mr. Woolliams: If the hon. member really wants to know, this is a speech prepared by me this afternoon. I am quoting some political scientists to whom, no doubt, Rip Van Winkle has never exposed his intelligence.

Quentin Hogg said:

Countries cannot be fully free until they have an organized opposition. It is not a long step from the absence of an organized opposition to a complete dictatorship.

Possibly I should quote Lord Acton again:

All power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

And that fits the hon. member for Burnaby-Seymour (Mr. Perrault). A former Prime Minister, the Right Hon. L. B. Pearson quoted the late R. B. Bennett with approval as follows:

Oppositions are essential and necessary in the development of a democratic state. They serve a great and useful purpose. To the extent that criticism is frank and thorough, to that extent they do a great service to the country.