

*Business of the House*

for, after all, every government has power over the membership following it to insist upon obedience.

Is there any member supporting the government who dare stand in the House of Commons and show his independence after the Prime Minister and the Minister of Trade and Commerce have thrown themselves wholeheartedly behind this motion? Quintin Hogg in his book on parliament says:

The rights of minorities and individuals are as indispensable a factor in a democracy as the privileges of an anonymous majority.

I say again that if there was any suggestion of filibustering, then the Prime Minister has his rights in order to prevent such filibustering. He has his rights under the rules. But instead of exercising the rights he possesses under the rules, he decides to change the rules. If there was filibustering the Prime Minister had power to apply closure, as it has been applied in proper cases. Instead of doing that he adopts the backdoor method of introducing an amendment to change the rules for the occasion. Parliamentary rules have stood the test in this country for eighty years, and in the mother of parliaments for two hundred years. It is dangerous to parliamentary government when rules become a monopoly of the Prime Minister and the government to be changed whenever they deem it necessary.

The motion in its present form mutilates parliamentary procedure, and I use those words advisedly. For it places in the hands of the government of this country, supported as it is by an overwhelming majority, the right at any time, at the wish and whim of the Minister of Trade and Commerce—and, as the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mitchell), so often says, I say this in a spirit of kindness—

**Mr. Howe:** "In a kindly way"—get it right.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** —to circumvent parliament and parliamentary procedure.

Nothing can stop the government from doing what it will with the rules for it is omnipotent. It is omnipotent because of its overwhelming majority. It is omnipotent because of the control the cabinet has over its followers, in that there are two sanctions that can be applied against independence, one being the threat of dissolution and the other the threat of preferment.

I have not spoken on these pipe line bills. The opposition has a right to demand the preservation of the rules of parliament, and not to have them changed at the will of the government. Parliamentary rules are designed to deny the short-cuts in parliamentary procedure which have taken place on a number of recent occasions.

In my opinion the amendment moved by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) does not meet the situation. Proper debate is not filibuster. Indeed, in an important matter that was before parliament some weeks ago, the question of grants for education to the provinces, was talked out by the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent). He spoke on it, no vote, the debate was adjourned, and private members' days were ended. There was no question of a filibuster by the Prime Minister, but that was the effect of what occurred.

I am not interested either directly or indirectly in any of these applicant companies. I have no views with regard to them although I have heard arguments on both sides. I am concerned with this motion which transcends the fortunes of any company, whether any of the principals in that company were interested in Beauharnois or not. This motion is but another example of an arbitrary attitude of mind on the part of this government. The government seems to develop that arbitrary turn of mind from being led or misled by the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe). Throughout the years this attitude has revealed itself, in this case in interference with the rules of parliament and in other cases by circumvention of parliamentary tradition and procedure.

**Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, many hon. gentlemen have spoken of the government's overwhelming majority, and the hon. gentleman who has just sat down has referred to the many occasions when the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) had circumvented parliament. I can assure hon. members that if the government has an overwhelming majority it is because of the opinion of the people of Canada about the Minister of Trade and Commerce. On every occasion and on every platform where I appeared during the campaign I never failed to pay tribute to the great service that the Minister of Trade and Commerce had rendered to this country and to assert that although the path might not be easy for trade in the months or years to come there was no man in Canada better fitted to guide Canadian trade during that period than the Minister of Trade and Commerce. The response that was made was such that it enables hon. gentlemen who have spoken in this debate to jeer at the fact that the government has an overwhelming majority. They forget that that overwhelming majority was sent here by the electors of this nation.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** With a hidden report.