

Now, I come to my final comparison. The Prime Minister can always hold a sword over the heads of his cabinet, the parliamentary secretaries and any of his supporters in the chamber by threatening to call an election. It is at his call, and his call alone, that a recommendation for the dissolution of Parliament can be accepted by the Governor General. This does not apply in the United States, if only because the dates of elections are fixed under the terms of the constitution. No President of the United States can hasten or delay an election. I know that in the history of this country on many occasions when government backbenchers and parliamentary secretaries were proving recalcitrant or critical of the conduct of a prime minister, the answer has been: If you don't like it let us call an election and we shall see then how many of you will get back. This made them toe the line, Mr. Chairman.

An hon. Member: Oh.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): I am sure the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, the hon. member for Calgary South, could, if he were prepared to break some confidences, tell us about some instances of which we have become aware through that authoritative source of information, the leak from caucus. These are the points of comparison I bring to the attention of the committee between the powers exercised by the Prime Minister of Canada, the Prime Minister of Britain and the President of the United States. The proposal before us today would make the Prime Minister of Canada even more powerful. I admit that within the cabinet there is a kind of political responsibility, but the power of the office of Prime Minister is unrivalled in regard to these five ministries of state, ministries whose name could be changed, whose function could be changed, ministries which could even be wiped out altogether by order in council. Even an order in council is, in fact, an order made by a cabinet under the dominance of a prime minister.

Another point I wish to emphasize is this. In clause 16 of this bill there is a power to vary by order in council the purpose or the objectives of a ministry of state. I would say that this would include the power to change the purpose for which money had been asked for or voted by the House. This is a power which has been denied to government in other cases. Indeed, Mr. Speaker has ruled that the government does not possess the power to change the purpose for which money was estimated and granted by the use of orders in council.

An attempt was made to do so in the case of the Dominion Coal Board, but it was ruled that the government did not have the power to vary the allocation of moneys voted on behalf of the board. Yet, here we are being asked to give carte blanche when it comes to altering the objectives, the composition and the financing of ministries of state. An attempt is being made to stampede the House into accepting this proposal by exerting all kinds of pressure. I could name member after member on the other side who must, surely, find it extraordinarily difficult to countenance legisla-

tion of this kind even for one moment. It is something which has never been done before and there is no reason to try it out now.

• (3:50 p.m.)

I talked the other day about efficiency and quick response. Why does not the parliamentary secretary set up a dictatorship? That is the most efficient and quickest way to get a flexible response. But in the view of the parliamentary secretary from Bonaventure, anything that is proposed by the government has been inspired by some divine source and can have nothing wrong with it; therefore, we should bow low and be thankful that we have such wise masters. That is the way Liberal members think. They think they own Parliament and the people of Canada.

An hon. Member: They are your words, not ours.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): But the actions are yours. The words uttered by hon. members opposite may well be Charlie McCarthy words for all I know. Certainly, the Prime Minister is the man in this House who said: "We are masters of this Parliament". According to the Prime Minister, members on the government side are the masters, but this is not the case. Never will I vote for a proposal whereby moneys voted by this Parliament may be diverted to another purpose by order in council. I suppose this is the government's way of trying to get around the ruling made by the Chair the other day that one cannot legislate by supplementary estimate. Under this proposal, the government would not have to worry about adding a supplementary estimate; they can legislate new provisions entirely by order in council.

It is a good thing that I let a period of time elapse between my last speech and this, because in the interim we have had the benefit of that really gem performance of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Frankly, Mr. Chairman, if one contemplates the possibilities under this proposal, it could turn out that that minister could be made a minister of state for economic affairs. And what a green-eyed disaster that would be!

I deny, of course, that the minister is correct when he says that presidents of Canadian banks have no right to speak out. They can criticize government proposals, whether in Canada or outside. I am not going to hold a brief for what they said, but I suggest that they do have the right to say what they said. I would like to hear what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister would have said had those particular gentlemen been laudatory of government programs in any way. I suppose it would then have been suggested that they be offered seats in the Senate; that they should be taken as witness of the efficacy or value of government action. But because they dared criticize, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister has the unmitigated gall, the impertinence, to suggest that one particular bank president be fired. I would have thought that the man who had earned the right to be fired was the parliamentary secretary.

An hon. Member: Who is it you are talking about?