

Business of Supply

President of the Privy Council. I should like to say that when the President of the Privy Council appeared before the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates he made the following statement:

I should explain that as President of the Privy Council I do not have responsibility for the Privy Council secretariat. I have a very small staff which attaches to me in my functions as President of the Privy Council which do not include the supervision of the Privy Council office—

In other words, the minister made it very clear when he appeared before the committee that he was there merely to satisfy our desire to have a minister for the estimates, when he in fact has no administrative responsibility whatsoever for these estimates.

Mr. Trudeau: I understand that, Mr. Chairman; but surely the essence of the question is, can the opposition get answers to the questions it wants to ask? So far I know of no questions which have been asked, of a pressing nature, which have not been answered. I repeat that if there are some questions which are so private and so secret that only I would know the answer to them, I will reconsider the request made by the hon. member for Hamilton West. However, I do not believe this is the case.

I believe the consideration of estimates is an occasion when the opposition wants to ask questions about spending figures. I am sure that should be the test. Whether it be myself, the leader of the House, the parliamentary secretary to the House leader or some other minister deputizing for me, the essence of the matter is, is the opposition getting the answers to which it is entitled? Beyond that, I repeat what I said at the outset of my speech: traditionally, parliament has been very indulgent in realizing that the prime minister has many executive functions, and that particularly under the temporary system of rules we have now adopted it is impossible to plan in advance, with any degree of certainty, whether or not a minister will be called.

I think the committee should understand that, and I repeat that it should base its judgment on the simple fact of whether or not the questions it is asking are being answered. The hon. member knows that I, myself, even if I were here until doomsday or for another ten years, as the hon. gentleman from Prince Albert seems to predict, will not know the answers in respect of some detailed estimate and I will ask my officials what particular set of figures corresponds to it. This is the practice of every minister of every government in appearing before this House. That is why I need the officials; the officials can help me, and certainly can help the House leader of our party.

● (1630)

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Chairman, I hope the Prime Minister will forgive me for making some comments before I ask him any questions, because I know that if I ask him questions he will take off in another half an hour.

I said a few moments ago, in response to some comment across the way, that I was angry. I was angry with myself. I felt I had been imprudent in so far as my colleagues are concerned, because when I was consulted this morning as to whether the Prime Minister should commence first with some remarks, or whether we wanted to speak first, I thought it was a matter of courtesy that when the Prime

[Mr. McGrath.]

Minister comes into the House he should have the opportunity of leading off the discussion.

We had operated on the basis of 15-minute shots, so to speak, back and forth. I am sure the leader of the House, the President of the Privy Council, clearly understood this. I do not think it ever occurred to him—and I give him the benefit of the doubt—when he was talking to us that the Prime Minister would go on, not for 25 minutes but for virtually an hour and 25 minutes.

An hon. Member: Abuse of the agreement.

Mr. Stanfield: I felt I had let my side down by thinking I was dealing with gentlemen and suggesting that as a matter of courtesy, since the Prime Minister was coming to the House he should start off; but I realized a couple of minutes after he started that it would not have made any difference anyway, because regardless of whether he started off the discussion he would have chewed off the rest of the time anyway, as he came obviously prepared to do. Of course, we will have an opportunity in the evening to put some of these matters to a vote of confidence.

I want to say one or two things to the Prime Minister that I have not said before. He is here and this gives me an opportunity to do it. Others have dealt with the matter. The Prime Minister this afternoon has dealt with Stornoway and with the swimming pool. I want to say, with regard to the swimming pool and the comparison with the bomb-shelter, that I think the Prime Minister operates under two standards when he speaks about restraint. I say to him very bluntly across the floor of the House, although I have never felt it necessary to say this sort of thing to him before, that I do not think he can justify to the House, whether it be to members of this committee or to the people of Canada, the scale to which the swimming pool is being built, particularly in the condition in which this country finds itself now.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: Secondly, with respect to the swimming pool, I say to the Prime Minister—and I am even more serious about this point on which he touched himself—that he cannot justify the lack of disclosure of donors. He referred to the way in which Stornoway was acquired. To be frank about it—as I understand it, the NDP were not included but that is by the way—Stornoway is to be either for the leader of the Conservative Party or of the Liberal Party in opposition—the leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): We will provide our own shack.

Mr. Stanfield: It is true that the names of donors was not disclosed, and it is true that that was an acceptable practice in those days. I am sure that those who made a donation never expected to receive any benefit from it. But I say quite bluntly—and I intended to say this before the Prime Minister raised the question today—that the procedure would not be satisfactory today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: It would not be acceptable to the Canadian people, particularly in view of the requirements for