

Business of the House

explanation as to any pressing emergency or necessity I wonder whether everything is above the surface as it should be. As I look at the situation I would have thought that the Prime Minister—if ever there was a Prime Minister of our country with a knowledge of the law to equal his, I am not aware of the fact—would have laid a foundation, as he led off on this motion, to let the house and the country know what are the matters of “urgent and pressing necessity” that require a complete change in our rules.

Because of the ruling that you made I find myself, sir, in the position of all those who have preceded me, of being unable to discuss this matter as I should like. With the greatest deference I say this. If the onus is on us to show that there is no urgency or pressing necessity for this, the facts of the bill would have to be discussed in order to show it. You, sir, having so ruled, the discussion as a result becomes more or less theoretical. The only justification advanced was by the Minister of Trade and Commerce, which apparently is that a filibuster has taken place. I have looked up the meaning of filibuster. Filibuster means this: any one or a group who attempt to prevent legislation by prolonged speaking to consume time. Obstruction, of course, is to block and to hinder. How many spoke on this matter? I think the total number who have spoken, including the minister, was seven or eight hon. members. The total discussion on this subject amounted to some two and a half hours. But the Minister of Trade and Commerce, with that peculiar affection for parliament and parliamentary procedure that he has always shown, was fearful that parliament was being circumvented.

He gave the House of Commons an hour of grace on November 15. I have read the reports in the British Journals, and I find no case where at any time any minister, much less a prime minister, became an active proponent of a bill introduced by a private member. What is the reason for this solicitude? No one knows. Why the urgency? Would discussion for a few more days have possibly brought other matters to light? The hon. member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Cruickshank) was one who took a firm stand; was he an obstructionist? Was any speech delivered by any member of the house on this matter other than a fair and proper discussion and an examination of matters deserving to be examined by parliament?

What are we coming to? The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) pointed out that there were no precedents for this course in Canada. I ask the Prime

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Minister when he replies to answer why this rush, why this endeavour to put the matter before a committee and thus deny a legitimate and proper criticism in parliament?

There is more to this than appears upon the surface. The Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) gave the house an hour of grace. His words were these—and he wants them quoted:

I should like also to say a word about what seems obviously to be a filibuster in connection with these bills. The government will not permit any small number of members to prevent this house as a whole from voting on a private bill.

Where was this small group of members? Members in all parts of the house spoke, seven in all—

Mr. Howe: If my hon. member will count the speeches on both bills I think he will find they ran to fifteen or sixteen.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am referring to the bill to which the minister referred in the words I have quoted. Yes, that is true; there were speeches on the other bill too. Surely this House of Commons is not to be throttled in order to meet the peculiar wishes of the Minister of Trade and Commerce? That is the issue here.

Nothing surprises me any more after what was revealed in the last few days in connection with the combines report.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker—“order”—I wait for direction in that connection from Your Honour. Surely I am allowed to refer to that as but another example of playing with parliament by virtue of the fact that the Prime Minister places his weight as Prime Minister, and that of the Minister of Trade and Commerce, behind this resolution.

Mr. Speaker: I hope the hon. member will not pursue the subject of the Combines Investigation Act further at this time.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): It is out of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I was discussing it as another example similar to this that occurred within the last few days. In this case parliament refused to follow the direction of the Minister of Trade and Commerce. It did not dance to his dictatorial tune. In effect he ordered the house on November 15 in these words, “you have a few more days, and then this government will see to it that your rights shall be denied.”

Sir, this morning the Prime Minister spoke with almost contemptuous disregard of the rights of minorities in parliament. We have a government with an overwhelming majority, supported as it must be by its membership—