

International Rivers

Mr. Hardie: Do you believe in ghosts?

Mr. Blackmore: Did you get what I said?

Mr. Hardie: I did.

Mr. Blackmore: Now, it is just as serious as that, sir. If this house puts its seal of approval on the wolf that is down under the sheep's clothing, it is a serious matter.

Many members in this house have served on committees, and may know that just as soon as a bill is given second reading and goes to a committee, the chairman of the committee generally says, "Now, gentlemen, the house has already settled the principle of this bill; this committee has no competence whatever to deal with the principle." What have we to deal with under the terms of reference? We begin to single out the various clauses, and in the case of most parliamentary committees the procedure is disappointing, if not farcical. I have been on enough committees to know how that works out.

Generally speaking, a committee—and this is too bad—before ever it sits is told pretty well by the government what it is to report. The report could be written pretty well before the committee has its hearing. I have been on committees long enough to know that is the case, and it is very much the same with royal commissions. The royal commissioners are told what they are supposed to find before they ever have a hearing.

Mr. Dickey: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Blackmore: I know that sounds strange.

Mr. Dickey: I rise on a point of order—

An hon. Member: Sit down.

Mr. Dickey: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member could indicate just how a discussion of the procedure of committees and royal commissions is relevant to the amendment that has been moved, or to the principle of the bill?

Mr. Blackmore: I am thankful for the interruption, because the hon. member has given me an opportunity to repeat my statement for the benefit of those who were too busy reading newspapers to get it. The matter arose from a statement I made which implied that back behind a government like this are probably a number who contributed to the campaign funds to elect it.

Mr. Dickey: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely the hon. member is not suggesting that what he has said is relevant to the matter under discussion in this house.

Mr. Blackmore: Yes, because I was pointing out how serious it is that the house should give approval to the principle of this

bill by giving it second reading, especially when the house knows so very little about the things involved in making up one's mind as to whether or not the bill might properly be passed.

Mr. Dickey: The hon. member should speak for himself, not for other members in the house.

Mr. Blackmore: That is just a silly and childish remark. This hon. member is speaking for himself, and is quite prepared to take the responsibility for everything he says.

Then I go on from what I was saying. I do not hesitate to repeat that there is in this bill not only the sheep's clothing principle of the bill but also the wolf principle that is under the sheep's clothing. We can easily give approval to the wolf principle of the bill, thinking we are merely giving approval to the sheep's clothing principle that is covering up the wolf. Now, that is a terribly serious matter, and I propose to go on from there.

An hon. Member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Blackmore: And if you just keep your ears and eyes open you will learn something. In the course of 19 or 20 years in public life one can learn much if he keeps alert. I feel we should do something which would give the country as a whole, and the members of parliament as well as the members of the provincial legislature, a chance to cool down and get all the facts, and then make a sober and sound decision in respect of this matter.

There is no urgency about passing this bill at all. This country will not disintegrate if we do not pass this bill for six months or a year. No harm will be done. We could very easily do what the hon. member for Peace River has suggested, both in his first and in his second amendments; because if we give six months' hoist to the bill it means simply that we take six months to think it over. And we can very easily afford to do that, considering all that is involved.

I wish to say just a word or two to show how much at sea the ordinary person will be in approaching the principle, or the facts which underlie the position, let us say, of the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources. First of all I wish to say a word or two with respect to that minister. I think this young man is one of the most promising young men who ever came into parliament.

Mr. Fulton: That is probably how he is elected, by promising.

Mr. Blackmore: I think, everything being considered, that this young man already has distinguished himself greatly both before the House of Commons and before the country.