

Business of Supply

complied with them. These require us to be completely free of conflict of interest. The same guidelines apply to Mr. Austin and he has complied with them. On the other question the hon. member has put, I am not quite sure whether it is in order to ask questions that are already on the Order Paper. However, this question about the correspondence paper and about the telephone will be answered in due course.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Chairman, I have one final question, if I have the time. Is Mr. Austin the individual or one of the individuals who drafted, assisted in drafting, or otherwise participated in the creation of the government guidelines to be observed by public servants concerning the conflict of interest situation? Did he have any input? Did he make any contribution toward the formulation of those guidelines?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Chairman, I am sure quite a number of people were consulted. I do not know whether Mr. Austin was one of them. However, I can assure the hon. member that it was the ministers who worked on this problem for many hours over many days in an attempt to work out conflict of interest guidelines for themselves. They also participated in the preparation of the green paper which is now before the standing committee and which, I understand, is receiving a good deal more support now than before, when it was not understood.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Chairman, I was intrigued earlier to hear the assertions by the government spokesman that it is unfair for us on this side to refer to the mutations which are taking place at the level of the Privy Council office and the Prime Minister's office and to refer to the evolution of a presidential system in Canada. Frankly I find myself somewhat in support of the government's position.

One need only look at the relevant differences between what is happening in Canada today and what is happening in the United States to recognize that the two situations are not comparable. In fact in the United States the position of the president vis-à-vis congress is substantially different from that of the present position of the Prime Minister of Canada vis-à-vis the House of Commons.

In the House of Commons we do not have any of the checks and balances written into the American constitution. In the United States the congress has the right and responsibility to confirm the appointment of officials chosen for high government positions. In Canada the government refuses to permit appointees to appear before committees before they go on the payroll. We had a case recently where we wished to interview the proposed vice-president of the CBC who, in time, will become president. The government refused. There was the invocation of executive privilege, or something similar to that. There was a refusal to allow the Clerk of the Privy Council to appear before the committee. That is one distinction between the Canadian and American system.

There is a difference in budgeting. Everyone who watches the United States knows that congress vetoes the budget proposed by President Ford. In Canada, when it comes time to stand up and be counted, the Liberal majority puts down any attempt to substantially modify the budget proposed by the executive. The same applies to the legislative program of the government. In the United

States the president's legislative program is subject to change by congress. Such is not the case in Canada. Time after time when it comes down to the crunch, the Liberal majority will stand up and support, however disagreeable it may be, whatever it is the government had proposed.

I cannot cite any higher or better authority with regard to the attitude of the Liberal government concerning the role of parliament than that which was written by an obscure Quebec writer in February, 1963, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who said:

I would have to point out in the strongest terms the autocracy of the Liberal structure and the cowardice of its members.

Such is certainly the case when it comes to the legislative program of this government.

We have seen the difference between the United States and Canada with regard to legislative oversight in security and intelligence gathering institutions in the two countries. In the United States at the present time there are three different commissions or committees looking into the subject of intelligence gathering and security in the United States. In Canada we have discovered that the government deliberately presented to parliament estimates in which security items are hidden and which are misleading when people look at them to try to determine the substance of the items. To date the government has refused to let us know what items in the estimates are honest items and what items are not.

Then, of course, there is the behaviour of the Prime Minister today. One after another members opposite have gotten up to talk about how the Prime Minister has a responsibility to answer questions in this House. We saw a pretty good example today of the Prime Minister's contempt for parliament.

The Liberal members told us about the need for the Prime Minister to be here for question period. The Prime Minister was not here for the question period. He was busy writing speech notes which would take an hour and a half of House time which would have been available for parliament to scrutinize his estimates. He then proceeded to read his monologue into the record. He then took off, refusing to allow parliament to scrutinize his estimates.

The differences between the two systems are quite acute. What concerns me is that the position of the member of parliament in Canada, with this arrogant and overwhelming majority that there is at the present time, is considerably less than the position of a congressman in the United States. As a consequence the rights of the Canadian people are less than those of their counterparts in the United States.

I wish to ask a number of short questions of the minister. Perhaps it will be possible for the minister to give short answers as well. First, is the minister prepared to make available to members of the House of Commons a list of those items which do not have security items hidden within them so that we know which estimates are honest estimates and we will know on which ones, when we are voting on a non-security item, we are also voting money for security items?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Chairman, when the estimates of the Privy Council office were before the miscellaneous esti-