

*Alleged Failure to Improve Economy*

directly to the inflationary situation in which we are in today. The Prime Minister has 29 cabinet ministers. He has a huge Privy Council office, plus a personal office, with program planners, regional desks, legislative assistants, public relations and tour co-ordinators, and a plethora of other specialists. Extensive planning of cabinet agendas and preparation papers are now mandatory. There is a great sea of cabinet committees, parliamentary committees, Senate committees, caucus committees, inter-departmental committees, intradepartmental committees, federal-provincial task forces, commissions, boards and a blizzard of study groups, as a former executive assistant to the hon. member who has just finished his speech put it in a recent speech to the Canadian Club in Toronto. Yet despite all of this octopus-like growth in the Prime Minister's office, despite the great gobs of public funds being used to support this growth, the quality and the quantity of the legislation and policy proposals have declined.

• (5:00 p.m.)

Let us look at some of the opinion that has been expressed with respect to this growth. On April 9, 1970 it was disclosed in a newspaper article that when the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) was Prime Minister he had an office staff of about 15, and by Mr. Pearson's time that staff had increased, but not alarmingly so. But in 1970, under the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), his office staff had grown to 75. The salaries involved are even more impressive. Marc Lalonde, the Prime Minister's principal secretary, accepts a mere \$35,000 a year. Ivan Head, legislative assistant, is in the \$25,000 to \$30,000 bracket. Mr. Romeo LeBlanc, head of the Prime Minister's press corps, is in the \$20,000 to \$25,000 bracket. Three members of the press corps are paid between \$15,000 and \$17,000; a fourth is in the \$12,000 to \$15,000 range.

Then there is special assistant James Davey—\$20,000 to \$25,000—and four other assistants who are paid between \$15,000-\$17,000. Naturally, there is an administrative secretary—Mary E. MacDonald, \$17,500 to \$20,000. There is even a "desk officer", whatever that is, at a salary said to be between \$17,500 and \$20,000.

The article went on to say that the numerical strength of the Prime Minister's office has been the subject of not inconsiderable comment by a number of hon. members, including the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield).

As for the ordinary citizen, he will be perhaps forgiven if he sometimes wonders why it is necessary to have such plain people as Members of Parliament or Cabinet Ministers to assist the prime minister in running the country when he has in his own office, such a formidable legion of highly paid mercenaries.

A few short months later, in September of that year, another newspaper article pointed out that the cost of 117 special advisers employed by the Cabinet amounts to \$1,451,849. What is happening to Parliament while we see this kind of growth proliferate, not just in the Prime Minister's office but in the offices of all the ministers? the usefulness of this institution is reduced.

This institution has always been responsible for the safeguarding of our freedoms and liberties. It is in Parliament that the free exchange of ideas and the clash of opposing views in unfettered debate have assured the

[Mr. Nielsen.]

right of the citizen to be heard. But in a short span of two and a half, almost three years the government has transformed Parliament into an ineffective flaccid forum where government decisions are announced with supreme arrogance and finality, all because of the shift of power at the expense of the taxpayer, by the offices of the Prime Minister and of his cabinet colleagues.

As the hon. member for Trinity pointed out, if one listened between the lines to his speech, when Parliament ceases to be the effective guardian of our freedoms and liberties then those freedoms and liberties die. Mr. Speaker, the process of erosion is well under way. If you have some doubt about it let us have a look at what I call an inventory of the socialistic policies brought in by the government within the last two and a half years. I will not say anything at the moment about the attempts by the government to emasculate the Auditor General, because while I am sure it did not see the errors of its ways, the public outcry was such as to place it with no other alternative but to desist. But one must ask oneself the question why?

Let me deal for a moment with the Department of the Secretary of State. The minister is one of what has often been called the Holy Three. His departmental estimates this year have been increased by \$88 million. Here is a gentleman who does not work under the aegis of any department when he is performing the functions of being the guardian of our languages and our culture, and some \$80 million of the increase in the estimates of his department are expendable by him in the role of being the guardian of our languages and of our culture.

Let us have a look at this agency the government calls Information Canada. Here is a minister who is not accountable to anyone else but the Prime Minister, and who takes his instructions and formulates his policies at the direction of the Prime Minister. He is responsible for an increasing amount of expenditure and an increasing number of civil servants. Information Canada was set up as an agency of the government, supposedly to inform Canadians about the activities of their government. How can we expect this so-called information agency to say anything critical about the activities of the government that set it up? How can we expect it to say anything critical about the economic situation in which we find ourselves today? If Information Canada had been performing the function it was supposed to, it would have been saying exactly what the hon. member for Trinity has just said.

Who was appointed head of Information Canada? Reading back through the debates to April 19 of last year, we find that the Prime Minister, at the time of tabling the report of the Royal Commission on Security, gave an undertaking to the House to have that report debated and to have a day set aside for that purpose. Despite repeated requests by opposition members, he has not yet set aside a day for debate on that report, which is now almost a year old. That report contains some very interesting recommendations. When one reads the reports of the questioning in this House with respect to the head of Information Canada, Mr. Gagnon, and when one reads the reports of the committee which examined the minis-