

Procedure and Organization

the Prime Minister's staff. Apparently they are usurping to a considerable degree the functions of the ministers who are responsible for the administration of the various government departments. This is one of the positive indications pointing to the truth of my contention. In the next few moments I shall deal with some of the more negative aspects of this trend.

There is ample evidence to show that in the year the government has been in office it has embarked on a policy of replacing the parliament of this country by what in effect is tantamount to a form of presidential government. All these innovations intended to downgrade parliament have been introduced as being beneficial and in the interest of updating parliament. These new ideas have been introduced in almost soporific terms, and it is clear that proposed rule 75c is one more nail in the coffin of parliament. Viewed in relation to all the other actions of the government to which I have alluded, it becomes clear that with respect to proposed rule 75c we cannot accept the assurances of the minister or the government.

As the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) said a few moments ago, the *Globe and Mail*, one of this country's leading newspapers, has alluded to the fact that a filibuster is going on. That newspaper does not trust the motives of the government or the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald). Many of us here do not trust the government or the house leader, especially in view of what has taken place during the last year. Let me give some examples, Mr. Speaker.

First, let us consider the committee system. When the new committee system was set up it was said that it was a great step forward. Members of parliament were going to become specialists in fields they were interested in—agriculture, defence, transport, foreign affairs, health and welfare, and so on. All sorts of latitude was to be given to committees in calling evidence and witnesses. The committees were to be non-partisan and independent; they were to take over certain functions of the house with respect to the study of estimates and consideration of bills. It all sounded very fine and some of us thought the millenium had arrived.

Let us look at what happened, Mr. Speaker. First let us consider what happened with respect to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, it being probably one of the most notorious of our committees at the present time. I need not repeat to hon.

members what took place in that committee last fall except to allude to the fact that there are allegations before the house and before the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections to the effect that the government house leader tampered and meddled with that committee's report by leaving out recommendations made by the majority of that committee. There have been other developments which led to the replacement of the committee chairman by another member of the government party. Only recently it appears that someone on the government side has been playing checkers with the members of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications. It seems that some government supporters who apparently did not agree with their colleagues were replaced, apparently without their consent and without being given notice.

Some hon. members may think I am making this up. Only this morning, in a meeting of that committee, one of the government's parliamentary secretaries brought up this matter himself. That is how serious it has become. It will be remembered that at great expense to the public purse that committee, with its staff of translators and others, was sent to the Atlantic provinces for several weeks to study the quite unique transport problems of that part of Canada. I can safely say, Mr. Speaker, that all members of that committee worked hard for long hours. They heard dozens and dozens of long briefs on the subject of transportation difficulties in the Atlantic provinces. The trip had one beneficial effect. It provided a very useful education to those members who went on the trip, albeit a very expensive education from the standpoint of the Canadian taxpayers. That trip certainly accomplished nothing else. Why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? Because, having sent the committee to the maritimes to hear representations on matters like the Prince Edward Island causeway, a subject of considerable discussion over the years, and other matters, the government went merrily ahead before the committee had even returned to Ottawa with a decision in this area. In fact, it did so before the committee members had even time to write their report.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Nesbitt: Another example is the Standing Committee on Agriculture. I am not a member of that committee but I have discussed this matter with my colleagues the hon. member for Kent-Essex (Mr. Danforth) and other members of that committee. Appar-