

Interim Supply

been so flagrantly abused by the government on this occasion, is something that has to be clearly examined and must never provide a precedent for the future.

This matter could have been handled so simply. I was disappointed with the Prime Minister on Thursday when he reiterated to me his refusal to my colleague from Peace River to have the report of the defence committee referred back to that committee for re-opening of the first item. After all, all the members of the opposition had dissociated themselves from this Committee Report. It was a shameful report, because a Liberal majority, on a quick motion, moved to report the estimates of this most important department back to the house without any comment.

Why was this done? The mover of the motion, the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, who missed seven of the 16 sessions of this committee, came in at the last moment and said that we then had not received the transcript, and when we did get the transcript this evidence would be cold porridge; it would serve no useful purpose. The hon. member was more concerned about arranging some trips for the committee this fall; this is what he thought was important. It is all a matter of record, and the hon. member can look it up in the proceedings of the committee.

The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra did not know what had transpired during the sessions of the committee. As a matter of fact, Mr. Chairman, I have a complete record of his attendance. For four of the most important meetings, including that at which Rear Admiral Landymore appeared, the hon. member who proposed this motion was not even present; so it was going to be cold porridge for him. This is the type of thing that I suppose the Prime Minister felt was normal to expect from the committee. But surely our request was the most logical and proper way of dealing with this matter. It would not have affected the status of Bill No. C-243. We could have looked at many of these matters. I do not know why this was not done. Was it because the government had gone so far out on a limb that it could not back away from the present situation?

In so far as the bill itself is concerned, there is no doubt that its subject matter could have been referred to the committee. The Prime Minister discussed this question the other night. In respect to the transport bill of 1965, Bill No. C-120, its subject matter was referred to the committee. It is no fault of the opposition that the bill had to be completely rewritten

[Mr. Lambert.]

because it went on a false premise. The new Transport bill would not have been presented to us the other day if it had not been for the railway strike, because it still required some work to be done on it.

In so far as the 1964 example of the Northwest Territories bill is concerned, there again on the initiative of my colleagues from Peace River and Yukon the contents of the bill were referred to the committee. The result, of course, was that the testimony was so adverse to the bill that the whole thing was dropped. It resulted in the Carrothers commission being appointed. We now have the Carrothers' report, and its recommendations are diametrically opposite, in many instances, to the contents of the original bill. Is this the reason the government fears to send the subject matter of the defence bill to the committee, because it is afraid of what the nature of the testimony might be and what the recommendations of the committee might be? It is interesting to speculate on that point.

The Prime Minister made much of a citation from May's Parliamentary Practice with regard to regular procedure in dealing with the bill. He also made a reference to the United States procedure. I do not quite share the Prime Minister's admiration for the United States procedure, but I would suggest to him that there is a fundamental philosophy at work in the desire of the house, and certainly of opposition members, to bring the provisions of this bill before the committee. I think that if he would examine the structure of European legislatures in this regard, he would find that legislation of this kind goes to the standing committees.

Mr. Pearson: Before second reading?

Mr. Lambert: Before second reading; and they have the right of amending. This is the purpose of those legislative committees.

Mr. Hellyer: Are you talking about the U.K. parliament?

Mr. Lambert: No. I said European—west European.

Mr. Hellyer: Which ones?

Mr. Lambert: Holland, Belgium, Germany and France. Not all proceed in the same way, but the same principle applies.

In these countries, it is part of the feeling of the legislators that they want more say in the proposal of legislation. This is a feeling we saw among some of the Liberal backbenchers who were on the procedure committee. On