

However, once the study of the problems and the discussions are over, the ministers in Cabinet alone can discuss them and the responsible minister alone must make the final decision. Afterwards, in the House as in the country, each minister, in his area of responsibility, and the members of the caucus assume the collective responsibility of the decision, and are responsible for it to the population at election time. Such is the foundation of our system: the daily ministerial responsibility of making decisions before Parliament and the people. That is why, Mr. Chairman, I am in this House every day to explain and defend the decisions we make, and to answer the countless questions put to us by the opposition all year long.

I think that the system of ministerial responsibility is the best for the Canadian people. It prevents one group from assuming power and leaves it to those who were elected to exercise it. We have made considerable effort to improve and defend that system.

● (1620)

[English]

The opposition talk about the executive authority in our system being unknown or hidden away in the personage of non-elected officials. This is nonsense and they must know it. The executive in the Canadian system is, and has always been, the ministry and that ministry is present and accountable to parliament.

It is with perplexity and a degree of sadness that I see some members of the Conservative Party in this House try to establish an argument that our system and the United States presidential system are similar in decision-making processes. The two systems are so different. In the United States, the executive is the President and he is supported by ministers and officials of his own choosing. In Canada it is the ministry who are elected by their constituencies and collectively represent the executive. In the United States, the executive is not responsible to Congress; it is a parallel authority set up in a competitive checks and balances process. In Canada, the ministry is responsible to parliament and must defend itself there every day. As I have said, this government is in a position to be more sensitive to this than most, on the basis of the experience I quoted earlier.

As I understand it, some members of the Conservative Party seek to substantially alter our system of ministerial responsibility to parliament. Some do not appear to accept the responsibility of ministers to defend themselves in the House in the question period, on estimates or at committees of the House. Some Conservatives say that officials who are not elected and represent no one should be callable. It is one thing for officials to appear; but when they are speaking for themselves and not for the government, who is accountable? A minister, in this type of Conservative system, could say that the official's opinion is his own, not that of the minister. Our policy, Mr. Chairman, has been to improve and defend the system we have enjoyed in Canada for over 100 years and which has had a great role to play in preserving our democracy by making the elected member paramount in the decision-making process and accountable for his actions when he is a member of the ministry.

### *Business of Supply*

I do not know whether certain members of the opposition have grasped the essential lessons that have led to the confidence which Canadians have in their political process. But at the same time, I ask others to think very seriously about trying to introduce procedures which have no bearing on the Canadian parliamentary system. They may make fine political headlines, but I am not at all interested in the introduction of the process of a presidential form of government. I rather suspect that those who insist I am moving Canada in that direction are doing so for whatever political reason they feel will foster their own political motives.

Mr. Chairman, I think that is perhaps all I wish to say at this point.

**An hon. Member:** You have another five minutes.

**Mr. Trudeau:** I will give the further five minutes to the opposition. I will be pleased to answer whatever questions they may want to ask in that time.

**Mr. Alexander:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Chairman. I can understand that the Prime Minister, of necessity, found it necessary to make a statement, and I also understand that he has to leave at 4.30. I have no quibble in respect of what he has done. I think he knows what I am saying. However, knowing his appreciation for justice, fair play and equity, and knowing that the agreement, as I understand it, was that the Prime Minister would make a statement and that questions could be asked as a result of that statement, I would ask the Prime Minister whether he would keep in mind the words I used, "justice, equity and fair play", for which he is so famous and reconsider the situation.

I understand that my House leader asked whether the Prime Minister would subject himself to questions at a later date. We understand that because of the pressures of his position he cannot be tied down and cannot give us a definite answer, but would he at least, in view of the statement and the agreement, agree that we are entitled to ask questions and that he will make himself available after discussion with the respective House leaders? Surely, Mr. Prime Minister, knowing how fair you can be, you will give us an answer right now.

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Chairman, in the same spirit in which the hon. member asks the question, I will certainly stay another 35 minutes and deal with whatever questions can be asked in that time. I will explain to the people whom I am supposed to meet that I have been delayed for reasons of very great importance. I would assure the hon. member that after I have left, the House leader and the officials will be here to continue to answer questions that I may not have been able to field or perhaps did not have time to receive, and then perhaps at the end of the day the opposition can make a judgment concerning whether they have more questions to ask which only I and no one else can answer; and if that should be the case I will reconsider the suggestion made by the hon. member.

**Mr. McGrath:** Mr. Chairman, on the same point of order, may I say we will have an opportunity to examine the Prime Minister on his estimates for less than half an hour. He tells us that we will have the views of the