

Borrowing Authority

steering committee make a decision? Why not let committees of this House operate with some independence, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) said they would? Why did the Minister of Finance not allow the committee to invite him, then write a letter and say: No, for such and such reason I do not think I should go?

Let the committee and this House of Commons judge his conduct, instead of going behind—*derrière les coulisses*—the halls of Parliament in a private meeting with his parliamentary secretary and telling him to go to the committee and change his mind. That is not the way Parliament works.

I must say to the Minister of Finance that I was impressed by some things the Prime Minister has said about reform in Parliament. For 11 years I have been a private member in this House. I have never been part of the cabinet. Therefore, I was happy to see the Prime Minister recognize that reform of Parliament did not only deal with its structure but with attitude. He stated his government would have an open attitude toward Parliament and would respect members of Parliament and give them an opportunity to obstruct. During the throne speech debate he stated members of Parliament would be given an opportunity to be independent, that they would have some degree of autonomy and would be able to force the government to do certain things.

● (1540)

I wish to deal briefly with something the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Baker) said on Tuesday evening regarding my participation in this debate. I quote from page 539 of *Hansard*:

Mr. Speaker, we will be proceeding with amendments to the Post Office Act tomorrow. I presume we will not have the intemperate display of obstruction we observed from hon. members just a few moments ago, given the fact that what the House is really doing now is dealing with the former government's own bill. It is like spanking your mother; it is not supposed to be done.

This bill is not the former government's bill. The hon. member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) explained that on Tuesday. Last winter the former government asked Parliament to increase the borrowing authority of the government to \$10 billion. The Conservatives said that could not be done before a budget was presented and as a result the bill was split. The Minister of Finance now has to come and ask for a \$7 billion authority because he and his colleagues forced the government to split the bill. The former government then asked Parliament for an authority of \$3 billion.

On June 4 this government took office and at that time there was an ample cash balance. There was no need for a borrowing authority. There is now a need. Therefore, I do not accept that this is the doing of the former government.

I appreciate that the Minister of Finance wanted to be humble today and explain that he really did not want to refuse an invitation by the committee. The committee should be allowed to do its work. The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Clarke) is in a very difficult position because of the actions of the Minister of Finance. That member is a very competent chairman of the finance committee. Members on

[Mr. Breau.]

this side supported his election. When he sat on this side of the House he was a very hard working member. He is a professional chartered accountant, a man who can really do a good job in the sense that the Prime Minister says he wants to reform and thereby give more independence to members of Parliament.

The Minister of Finance has humiliated this man, having him vote against his own steering committee report. The minister will learn that is not the way to deal with the steering committee or the finance committee. Nor is it the way to deal with members of Parliament, as he did the other day with the hon. member for Vaudreuil. In his explanation today, the minister tried to say that it was not so bad. However, as recorded at page 504 of *Hansard* the hon. member for Vaudreuil rose during a legitimate debate. We had just agreed to give unanimous consent to a motion to cut off the study of estimates in committee. The hon. member for Vaudreuil stated that now that the minister had changed his mind and we on this side were being co-operative, would the minister accept his responsibility for fiscal policy and appear before the finance committee. The jolly old Minister of Finance then became arrogant. This is what he said:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is talking through his hat. I have not refused to appear before the finance committee. I am quite willing to appear before the House of Commons finance committee . . . I will appear when I am in town and after the governor of the Bank of Canada has been heard by the committee.

Who the hell is he, at three o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, to decide who the finance committee is to invite? The finance committee only made its decision close to ten o'clock in the evening. The minister was being arrogant with Parliament. If the finance committee was going to invite him, was he going to say no? The minister went on to say:

There is no one opposite whose questions I hesitate to answer. When I come before the committee I hope the hon. gentleman is there to ask a few questions.

The minister comes here and says that he is the boss and will appear before the committee when he is in town. I will not accept that. The hon. member for Vaudreuil and this party will not accept that arrogance. The Prime Minister wants to reform Parliament and the President of the Privy Council wants the business of this House to run smoothly. Therefore, we have to signal something here. The Minister of Finance tried to bully members of this House, even those of his own party. He had his parliamentary secretary do that. And he has answered a private member in a very arrogant manner.

I firmly believe that what the Prime Minister said about the attitude of the government is very important. Over the 11 years that I have been here, the House of Commons has run on mood and attitude. The structure does not matter. If the mood is good, legislation goes through. However, that is not the case when the minister tries to get tough. Therefore, because of what the Minister of Finance has done, and in order to teach him a lesson, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Vaudreuil:

That the debate be now adjourned.