

*Forecast by Treasury Board*

when government members have been satisfied merely to recite the somewhat dubious accomplishments of the departments in which they are interested. I hope we can deal with the central issue which characterizes this motion.

**Mr. Breau:** Would the hon. member permit a question? If it is so important in a political democracy that all position papers and evaluations within parties—and, after all, the government is a party—should be disclosed, does he accept the proposition that position papers prepared for his own party by his own party's research staff should be made public before a decision has been taken on them?

**Mr. Grier:** I notice the hon. member finds some difficulty in distinguishing between a party and the government. That is, perhaps, a tendency peculiar to his own party. I am sure, though, he must recognize that there is a world of difference between documents belonging to a government, which, incidentally, is not a party, and those belonging to his own party. I am not interested in asking for the documents of the Liberal caucus, nor am I interested in revealing the documents of the NDP caucus. Neither of us has any obligation but to our own members. The government, on the other hand, has an obligation to the country and to parliament, and it is to this obligation I am addressing myself.

**Mr. Breau:** I appreciate the distinction the hon. member has made, but the example I used was merely by way of illustration. I was asking whether the NDP would agree to give up its sources of information before it had made up its mind on policy.

**Mr. J.-J. Blais (Nipissing):** I take great pleasure in rising to speak on this measure, and I hope my contribution will assist in setting out the position because I think the issue is indeed an important one and one which deserves considerable attention. It goes to the root of the whole principle of parliamentary democracy.

I was not informed of the situation in Sweden. I should like the hon. member, if he has no objection, to provide me with the document he has cited so that I could perhaps pursue the matter further on my own. I did take strong exception to the remark he made to the effect that those contributing to the debate from this side of the House had contented themselves by reciting departmental accomplishments. I have read the speeches and I did not find this to be the case at all. I found that the position he took was very clear but that the arguments presented by liberal members were equally clear.

There is one consideration which pervades the whole issue. It is that the NDP, for obvious reasons, are most interested in finding out how government works since they have not had any experience of government at the federal level. The Liberal Party, on the other hand, has held the reins of power in this country for a considerable time—

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** For far too long.

**Mr. Blais:** —and gained considerable experience while doing so. Surely, the hon. member for Winnipeg North  
[Mr. Grier.]

Centre (Mr. Knowles) would be the first to agree that his contributions to the legislation presented to this House has been substantial. He has done this in the context of our parliamentary procedure.

Looking at the tradition of Canadian and, indeed, British parliamentary development we find that initially there was regency, or monarchy. The decision-making process resided in one person. Subsequently, as government became more complex, the regent sought the advice of advisers who surrounded him and a cabinet system developed. In England, popular pressure demanded a constitution, and a constitutional monarchy was formed. The people secured power through the creation of a parliament and it was determined that the advisers to the Crown, the government, should be chosen from the members of this parliament and would be responsible to parliament for decisions taken. So, the members of the government are deemed to be the monarch's advisers. Because of the complexity of government in a modern age, they, in turn, have secured the assistance of advisers who are called civil servants.

I am taking some time trying to explain this because I am under the impression that some of my constituents really do not know how government works. This debate might provide clarification of the process. To a considerable extent, the Crown's advisers depend upon the civil service. We have developed, in addition, a tradition that whatever intercourse there may be between the Crown's advisors and those civil servants is a matter which is kept within strict limits of confidentiality. This follows from the fact that the government is not held responsible to parliament until a political decision has been made, that is until advice has been given to the Crown. Perhaps it is a fiction nowadays, but this is the way in which government and parliament have developed. So, government has kept confidential the documents which assisted in arriving at decisions because its responsibility to parliament and the people is to answer only after decisions have been taken. They have preserved the prerogative of keeping whatever advice they have received confidential. Over the years, the system has functioned very well. I might add that under the committee system, after decisions have been made, opportunities are available to members of parliament to demand explanations and ask for reasons why certain things have been done.

● (1730)

The hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore (Mr. Grier) wishes to take this matter one step further. He wants to push it so that parliament has the power over decision-making, prior to decisions being made, by reviewing administrative documents submitted to the cabinet by individual ministers. On reading his motion, he seeks to have produced not only budgets A, B and X but also the program forecasts. He wants the whole kit and caboodle; and he wants it all produced to individual members of parliament before the decisions are made. What is even worse, after decisions are made by the government, he wants to have the power of hindsight in respect of all those documents so he can review the decision-making process and try to pick holes in it.

Surely at this time, when the whole country finds that perhaps the parliamentary process is not as fast as it ought