

Business of Supply

that relates to the summoning of officials. I have never in my experience seen a committee which did summon an official to appear before it, and that does raise a question whether, if a minister objected and the committee then required his attendance, that would raise issues with which I am not quite sure how to deal.

Mr. Baldwin: On a point of order, Madam Chairman, I was chairman of a committee back in 1962 which summoned the then secretary of the Privy Council to appear before it.

Mr. Sharp: If the minister did not object to the official appearing, that is perfectly all right.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Sharp: The only question which arises is whether a committee may summon an official contrary to the wishes of his minister who is taking responsibility for his actions, and in these circumstances, since I have never seen a situation like this, I treat it as a hypothetical question. I remember on one occasion one of my predecessors in office, Jack Pickersgill, saying when that question was put to him, "I think the minister would have to resign." Perhaps that is the answer, but at any rate it does illustrate the point—

Mr. Baldwin: It's worth considering.

Mr. Sharp:—that it is the responsibility of the ministry for administration as well as for policy.

In regard to the first of the questions put by the hon. member for Peace River, perhaps I could read from a memorandum to the Privy Council staff on press interviews. This was the procedure to be followed:

"Press Interviews" here mean the type of interview at which the employee is identified personally, in the same sense that an article signed by him or a public statement would identify him. No member of the PMO-PCO will give such interviews on matters relating to their work, unless with the specific authority of the Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet and/or the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister.

Those are the instructions, and I think they are wise because I think civil servants should be anonymous and should act within the authority of the government, and since the ministers take responsibility they must be able to guide them in their relations with the press.

As to the questions about secrecy and information, the hon. member for Peace River and I have had some exchanges on this subject. In general I think we are both trying to move in the same direction. He has given me credit for believing that it is important to this parliament in order to discharge its responsibility to have as much information as possible. That is the principle this government is following.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Sharp: The hon. member for Peace River has put his finger on the difficult question of how to determine when the government is giving all the information which can safely be given. I have examined that question, and my hon. friend has, too. I am not quite sure that we came to the same conclusion. My difficulty arises in trying to place upon somebody else, a judge or some "irresponsible" per-

[Mr. Sharp.]

son—and I put that word in quotes—who does not have to be responsible for the consequences of the action—how do you place a responsibility on an irresponsible person for the consequences of the revelation of information which the government considers should be treated confidentially?

That question is very difficult to answer.

Mr. Baldwin: You give judges the right to try people for their lives and to try cases involving millions of dollars.

Mr. Sharp: I suggest that is a different question. The question for a government is what kind of information can be safely revealed without hurting innocent people or damaging national security? We have to take responsibility for the consequences. I do not see how we can pass that responsibility on to an irresponsible person.

An hon. Member: Are members of parliament irresponsible?

Mr. Sharp: I hope we are working in the same direction in trying to give as much information as possible to parliament.

Mr. Horner: Madam Chairman, this has been an interesting debate. I regret that I had to leave the House at 3.30 to go into a committee, but it is an interesting debate because one gets a concept of how members view their work, and how they view the Prime Minister and whether he is God or whether he is answerable to this House.

At three o'clock this afternoon the Prime Minister came to the House to make his speech. He appeared to be a petulant, spoiled boy after having done some dirty tricks, coming to his mother, speaking in quiet tones with his hands quietly clasped in front of him, as he pleaded with his mother that he had really done no wrong, he had not really meant to hurt anyone, to do any dirty tricks, to throw sand at some little girl, or do something like that. That is the way it appeared to me, just a petulant, spoiled little boy appearing before his mother hoping he would not be scolded too harshly.

● (2130)

He did not feel that he should be answerable in any way for this place. In fact in the time that I stayed to listen to him he deliberately tried to distort some of the figures furnished by the research offices of this party and his own party as to the amount allowed for expenditure on parliament.

It is interesting to listen to government back benchers discuss their concept of parliament. When the Prime Minister set up the regional desks there was a great rumbling from the back benchers of the Liberal Party. They complained that the regional desks were usurping their role in parliament and if they wanted to find out something they had to consult the regional desks because they could not find anything out from the departments. They have got over that, and now accept their role as trained seals.

There was not a member of the NDP in the House all evening until just now when the member for Winnipeg South Centre came in. It is nice to see that the defenders