

*Supply*

very important to the people of that area in the House of Commons. Of course the two most recent examples were the Constitution and Canagrex. To have our opportunities to debate important new laws frustrated by closure is an abuse of Parliament.

There are a number of danger signals of which all Member should be aware. We have some concerns when the highest Government Members do not have much regard for our parliamentary tradition. One of the most recent examples was the budget leaks. We know from looking at British examples that there have been resignation for the most minute leaks, but in this case there was no resignation or admission that anything out of the ordinary had been done. According to the Government everything was fine.

Also we have seen the Government allowing non-Members—in this case the Party President—to pass out Government cheques at a particularly partisan function. People who wanted to receive cheques had to attend the partisan function to collect them. This happened in the riding of the Hon. Member for Bruce-Grey (Mr. Gurbin). That is the kind of danger signal at which we in Parliament should be looking. We should be worried about this type of thing and it should cause us some concern. It is the type of thing that can erode Parliament.

Another example was the Coalgate affair. Also we have seen favours bestowed upon people such as the architect about whom we recently talked in the House of Commons. Another area of concern was that of the executive being held accountable to Parliament. We have seen different ways in which the Government has managed to get around this. The first may well be that of attempting to overborrow. We have seen this in some of the borrowing Bills that have come before the House. We have seen letters of comfort being given to companies such as Canadair and Consolidated Computer. Of course, the net result is that we as Opposition Members and Parliament as a whole do not have a full opportunity in which to debate such issues.

Another would be the loose reporting rules for Crown corporations. Several Crown corporations have not been reporting although they are obligated to do so on a once a year basis. We are not seeing that translated into action. Another method of the Government's avoiding accounting for its actions in the House is the entire area of advocacy advertising. I refer to the advertising we have seen recently on the Crow issue and that on the Constitution. I believe they are examples of abuse of Parliament and of the rights of Members of Parliament. It takes away our opportunity to debate an issue thoroughly, clearly and freely in a forum which was designed for that purpose. It is an abuse of power and an abuse of Parliament.

Then there is the area of the agents of government policy which are beyond the scrutiny of the House. Recently we saw the formation of CIDC, a master Crown corporation, which is causing some concern. There is no authority from Parliament for that particular organization. In fact, it is operating by taking funds and channeling them through other Crown

corporations. It is managing to survive, keep afloat and grow without Parliament's having had an opportunity to debate it.

Then we have the whole area of secrecy, those areas in which parliament has not been able to touch the Government. There have been Orders in Council. Probably one of the most significant ones debated in a while was the War Measures Act and the changes made to it behind closed doors without any debate in Parliament. This was a concern to people. Also there is the area of ministerial discretion which was clearly demonstrated in Bill C-48. I sat in on the committee which looked into that matter. We talked about some of the areas which gave Ministers so much power, latitude and freedom. Perhaps that abuse of Parliament is beneficial to the administrators, to Government Members and to Cabinet, but if the trend continues we will eventually have a Government without meaningful representation of the elected people. We will have government in secret, Cabinet-made law, laws made by bureaucrats and Crown corporations which have a significant impact upon the economy and upon the country, without any opportunity for debate in the House of Commons. Therefore, essentially Parliament will not be the source of law because it has no meaningful debate or representation on central issues. In fact we will have created a mere shell of a great institution.

Canadians are beginning to realize that many of the forces affecting them are government and that they are no longer Parliament. In other words, as individuals or as representatives of a given area, we do not have an opportunity really to influence or have an impact upon matters which will dramatically affect our people. Canadians have the right to expect democratic representation in institutions which have or should have control over government. Potentially we could return to much the same situation about which I talked in my earliest example of the reasons Parliament came about. We now have Cabinet gathering into its hands unlimited financial control, as well as control over everything else.

In the last part of my remarks I want to touch upon some of the things that have been done to effect some changes in this institution. I want to refer to two examples which we are practising right now in the House that are demonstrative of the things the Committee has been attempting to accomplish. The first item which caused concern in the House was the moving of Private Members' business to Wednesday to provide an entire day exclusively for Private Members' business. The purpose was to raise the profile of the private Member because as a Committee we have been struggling to see private Members take their due place in this institution and begin to have an impact. This can only happen when we as Members of the House of Commons become involved in the process and when it becomes alive and begins to function. This is very demonstrative of what the Committee is trying to do.

● (1640)

The second change has been really quite exciting. I have heard a lot of comments from Members on both sides of the House. I refer to the 20-minute speech with the 10-minute question period. That has allowed some spontaneity in the