

*Federal-Provincial Relations*

guess, what was the cause of those resignations and what the consequences will be.

We all recognize that in the last few years there have been major changes of the kind to which I have referred in the way the Government of Canada works. We might, on different sides of the House, disagree as to the importance or significance of any particular change, but it is clear that the Privy Council office has grown, that the Prime Minister's office has grown and that the power of the Prime Minister has grown. Yet it is highly significant that today, as we deal with the measure before us, although there have been a multitude of changes, this is the only one which has been brought before the House of Commons. All the other changes, though in effect they have altered the nature of our government, have occurred beyond our reach. We have not been asked to approve them. We have received no legislation in respect to them. We have not had the opportunity which is now given us to debate legislation.

**Mr. Darling:** They've been slipped in through the back door.

**Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain):** As my hon. friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Darling) has said, "They've been slipped in through the back door." And whatever the implication of that, Mr. Speaker, I believe it is agreed by all members of the House that this is not a satisfactory situation for the Parliament of Canada.

The other day I introduced a private member's bill to try to take the very simple, elemental step of establishing a parliamentary committee which would look into the powers and prerogatives of the Prime Minister. Such a committee might have been able to work out ways in which that office, and the offices which have grown up around the Prime Minister, could be made responsible to parliament from which, in theory, all the Prime Minister's powers are supposed to flow. Some sympathetic noises were made on the other side of the House in relation to that bill but, as happens with so many bills which propose changes for which the government is not ready, it was talked out. There is a temptation, Sir, for me to repeat at this time the arguments I made during my eloquent address on that subject during the private members' hour—

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain):** I should say to hon. members to my immediate left that the temptation is even greater now because there was not a quorum present in the House of Commons when I spoke on private members' hour, as customarily there is not a quorum present during such periods. However, I will resist the temptation to repeat that argument, except to summarize by saying that not only has the size of the Office of the Prime Minister increased numerically, as we can see from the size of the staff for which the hon. member for Scarborough East was recently responsible, but that its power, too, has grown, simply because the role of government has grown. This applies also, of course, to the Privy Council Office, but bearing in mind the extent to which the media concentrate on the Prime Minister, the accretion of power has been

[Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain).]

particularly substantial in relation to the Office of the Prime Minister.

I should say one more thing in this connection. The hon. member for Scarborough East, in response to a thoughtful and important speech by my colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Roche), said there was no need for a special minister of inter-governmental affairs or federal-provincial relations. He said the reason such a need did not exist was that there is already a minister—the Prime Minister. Well, sir, one of the alarming facts about the Office of the Prime Minister and about its responsibilities is that the Prime Minister, alone among ministers, does not appear before a standing committee of this House to answer questions. He is not subject to questions except during the generally unsatisfactory exchange which takes place in the course of the question period, when the possibility of intensive inquiry is seriously limited. He is not directly responsible for answering questions in a standing committee, as are other Ministers of the Crown or as a minister responsible for federal-provincial relations would be.

This relates to the whole question of the growing disproportion between the power of the Prime Minister and his cabinet and the power of this chamber, one which has diminished substantially in recent times. I made the point the other day, and I repeat it now, that in a very real sense this parliament has more control over the president of the CNR or of Air Canada or of any other Crown corporation than it has over the Prime Minister. I say this because the holders of those high positions are expected to appear before standing committees and explain what they are doing, while the Prime Minister is not. This, I suggest, is a serious deficiency. I say, too, speaking personally, that I sympathize with the motive of the Prime Minister in expanding the Prime Minister's office and the Privy Council office so as to allow him, as the elected political head of the government, to balance the opinion of an appointed public service.

● (1720)

I think there comes a time in the growth and size of government when that sort of thing is necessary, and we have reached that time here. So I sympathize with the motives. But I do not sympathize at all with the literal irresponsibility of those opposite, and the fact that they are beyond the reach and effective scrutiny of the members of the House. That is not acceptable. Neither, I believe, is it acceptable that we place the highly important question of federal-provincial relations within the ambit of responsibility of the Office of the Prime Minister, who does not appear before standing committees, or is not in the practice of appearing.

**Mr. O'Connell:** Would the hon. member permit a question?

**Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain):** Yes.

**Mr. O'Connell:** Does the hon. member mean by his allegation of irresponsibility on the part of prime ministerial staff that members of the Prime Minister's office, for example, like members of the President's office in the United States, should be called before committees and examined? Is he suggesting that we move to the presiden-