

most adequate job and made the point very effectively. Therefore I will not comment.

I will speak briefly of the Committee. Serving on this Committee has been an exciting experience for me as a new Member of this House. I have had an opportunity to look at the rules, learn about them and to learn of their implications. Essentially, I have been able to get a better feel for this House than I would have otherwise had I not been a Member of this Special Committee.

I have been listening to the debate with interest today, in particular the comments made by the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton, the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), and other Members.

I want to approach this subject on three different levels. The first is to look a little bit at what I see as the historical purpose of Parliament. Second, I will look briefly at the way I see the present situation and outline some of the concerns that I have with it. Third, I will look at what I perceive as some potential for change and relate some of the ideas we have been debating in Committee.

Looking first at the history of Parliament, we find that the purpose of Parliament, our Parliament's mother, really grew out of the frustration of a people who had rulers with absolute power. The king and Parliament could not agree on the role of one or the other. Parliament had control of taxation and the king had control of virtually everything else. Because Parliament did not co-operate and grant the king excessive taxation, he turned around and suspended it. A revolution took place that displaced the king and we ended up with a fellow by the name of Cromwell, who eventually became a dictator. That era was followed by a king with fewer powers, and Parliament began the long evolution that brings us to where we are today. Parliament has moved toward becoming both the representative and the governor of its people, which is a unique role, and is in some ways a profound contradiction. However, we as parliamentarians must do all we can to preserve both of these aspects.

Lately I have had some concern. I can speak only as a Member of this House since 1980. This Government has ignored its task of according Parliament the respect it is due. First, in some cases I think it has ignored the legitimacy of representation, and I think in some other cases it has been concentrating Government power outside of Parliament.

We have seen demonstrations of limited debate, which tend to reduce the function of representation for which all of us have a responsibility. Also, some of the decision-making process has been removed from Parliament, and that diminishes Parliament as governor.

I have some concern that Parliament has had its procedures undermined at the expense of traditions by having the importance of its conventions ignored, conventions which are a large part of our history and are of fundamental value to the way Parliament works and functions. Second, the vitality of the House is dependent upon a free and lively debate. The rules and procedures are backed up to a great degree by unwritten

laws, conventions and things that we simply cannot put down in clear language.

I think this Government has ignored the history of the House, through its use of written rules. This Government has used them in certain ways in a spirit that is in contradiction to the conventions that were established. It is not in a sense doing anything illegal but very often it is doing something that is in fact excessive. I guess it very simply boils down to—and we talk about it often in Committee—the entire issue of attitude. Attitude is the difference between making a rule work, abusing a rule or just generally breaking down a rule. The question of attitude has been one of my concerns.

● (1630)

I would like to give some examples to demonstrate this. The first one was that which brought about the bells. This has become a significant matter. I guess it was the reason we then proceeded with the establishment of the Committee which has been very important to all of us. I am referring to the omnibus Bills, national energy Bills. They caused a great deal of concern to Members of the Opposition and all of us are familiar with the net result. Of course it then led to the formation of the Committee. The omnibus Bills are the first example I give of an abuse of Parliament.

The second example of that is so-called incomplete Bills. The most recent demonstration of that is the one now before the House in the Crow debate. The Minister amended the Bill outside the House, so on and so forth. There are many difficulties.

The third example is vague Bills. The most recent example would be the so-called spy Bill about which there were several questions today during Question Period.

The Government seems to resent—and I know it is a fact because I have heard several comments about it; in fact we heard comments about it today—the fact that we as an Opposition resist bad legislation. As a result, it has turned around and invoked, or at least threatened to invoke, closure or time allocation in some 22 instances since 1980. Two particularly significant debates on which the Government brought in closure were both on very important issues. Of course the first one was the Constitution. I found it quite unacceptable to see closure introduced on something as fundamental as the central laws or the rules by which the country will be operated. It was unacceptable to see closure brought in before many Members of the House had an opportunity to speak on the particular issue. The second one—and we will see evidence of it again tomorrow—was Canagrex. This Bill has a significant impact on a very large part of the country. In fact, it will ultimately affect all Canadians.

It becomes very much a concern of Members of the Opposition when the Government brings in closure, particularly when we think that in the present situation the Government does not have any representatives in a large part of the country west of Winnipeg. The Government has no Members from that area. Thus it is necessary to have time to debate issues which are