

Why is it that the Prime Minister announced the legislation, the resignation, and the appointment before he knew whether or not the legislation would be acceptable to this parliament? I know, of course, the answer may be that that is the way of constitutional government works. Well, if that is the way our constitutional government works, it does not work properly. It is a negation of parliamentary democracy. The Prime Minister over and over again has been an exponent of what he has termed our free institutions, the institution of a free parliament. But his actions seem to belie his words. The Good Book says, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth"; the Prime Minister, however, must be reading from some modern version that I have not yet read. He believes in not letting what you say know what you have already done.

I have watched this trend over the years, particularly since I have been sitting in this house. It seems to me that there has been a steady move to push parliament into the position of a rubber stamp. We do not like that. I had not been sitting here more than a couple of years when one of my colleagues said to me, "What is the use? We cannot do anything here". It would appear that we cannot, that everything is cut and dried. The Prime Minister comes along and says, "Now boys, this is what we have done; legislation will be introduced so that you can verify it". So we meet down here and our machine politics are of such a nature that men vote as yes men. That is about the situation.

I rise simply to object on principle. I am not objecting to the reconstitution of the board. I think the government has thought the matter pretty well through, and I am not objecting on those grounds. But the Prime Minister did not even have, shall I say, the courtesy to introduce the measure without saying anything about resignations or appointments. What he should have done was to let parliament approve this and then seek to fill the appointments. He may have had in the back of his mind the person he wanted to do the job; he may have had everything arranged, but the way this has been done was simply a negation of democracy and the flouting of our free parliamentary institutions.

Mr. KNOWLES: Mr. Chairman, no doubt when the Minister of Justice replies to the hon. member for Macleod he will point out that when the Prime Minister made his statement on June 8 he merely said that the government intended to accept Colonel Cross' resignation after this legislation had been passed, and that it was merely the intention,

[Mr. Hansell.]

subsequent to the enactment of this legislation, to appoint Mr. Justice Archibald to the exchequer court and then as chief commissioner of the board of transport commissioners.

Mr. DIFENBAKER: Is that mind reading, or is the hon. member the minister's parliamentary assistant?

Mr. KNOWLES: I think my hon. friend realizes that that is precisely the sort of reply the Minister of Justice would make. He might also point out that if the Prime Minister had not made this announcement in advance, hon. members on this side would probably be questioning the government now as to what their intentions were.

Mr. ILSLEY: Hear, hear; that is certainly true.

Mr. KNOWLES: It is probably true. I might be one of those who would be asking what those intentions were. But even with the best face that can be put on the course the government has taken, which is what I have tried to give, I think there is merit in the objections which have been put by the hon. member for Macleod. If this happened only once, the objection might seem technical, but the hon. member for Macleod is right; we go through session after session feeling that we are called upon just to rubber-stamp decisions made in advance and announced in advance by the government.

I shall not rehash the other instance we had this session, or the instances in previous sessions, because they are vivid in the memories of hon. members. But I do think that the Minister of Justice and the other ministers should not simply be offended by the remarks that have been made by the hon. member for Macleod. Rather, out of the interest which I am sure they have in parliamentary democracy they should think these matters over a little more carefully.

The Minister of Justice said "hear, hear," to a remark I made a moment ago. I suggest that what I referred to at that moment would have been a better course than the course that has been followed. At least the announcement of the government's intentions might have waited until we had the bill before us, until private members were asking the government how it intended to implement the proposed legislation.

This may seem of small importance to ministers who have been in power for a long time, but it looms large in the experience of those of us who are private members and also in the thinking of Canadian people generally. I am trying to keep my voice moderate about this. I have tried to indicate, to such an extent that