

whips on both sides, government and opposition. They now have the right under the rules to effect party discipline, which was always the right of the leader of the party in caucus.

I have said before that the backbenchers have no power at all, but at least when a bill was being considered clause by clause in committee of the whole a member on this side could take issue with any of the clauses and thereby express disappointment or antagonism with regard to certain matters in the bill, in accordance with the feelings of his constituents. The member might not vote against the bill; very few members on this side have ever voted against a government bill, but at least the member had the right to express his opposition to any clause in committee of the whole. Now he does not have that right because the minute he opposes any part of a bill the whip will take him off that committee and put on somebody else. The member will have no recourse at all. He cannot have recourse to you, Mr. Speaker, so he cannot appeal. In other words, this is an arbitrary action affecting party discipline in the House of Commons and I wonder whether this house will accept a rule that goes that far.

What I have to say does not apply to the present leader of the house. I say this in all seriousness. The house leader and I have had many disagreements on these various items. We have argued this out and he knows where I stand. He has been fair at all times. Indeed, he knew exactly what I was going to say today but he made no attempt whatever to keep me off the list. Therefore, these remarks do not apply to the present house leader. I do not believe they apply to any other minister. However, the time will come when, in order to satisfy officials who are being examined in committee, a minister may speak to the whip or house leader, indicating he would like a certain member removed from a committee.

Mr. Baldwin: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Otto: Yes.

Mr. Baldwin: I note the hon. member's speech with approval. At this point could he say whether he approves a statement made in an article written by the Prime Minister in 1963 in *Cité Libre*, when he was expressing his views about party discipline and particularly in the party opposite?

Mr. Otto: I regret that I am not familiar with the article to which the hon. member

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refers, but I am questioning now the statement the Prime Minister made that much more attention ought to be given to individual rights. I am sure this must apply to the rules.

Mr. Stanfield: And even to members.

Mr. Otto: Let me put the other side of the question because nothing is one-sided. Perhaps I may be the devil's advocate for a moment. It is true also that the government must maintain attendance in these committees; they must make sure the committees are attended. I am sure hon. gentlemen recognize that if some members continually fail to appear in these committees there must be some method of removing them or substituting other members for them.

I regret that the house leader is not here at the moment because I should like to suggest to him that rule 65(4)(b) should be amended. The rule should provide that when a committee is sitting and all the members are not in attendance, the whips may appoint or authorize the chairman to appoint any other member of the house who may be present at that committee to be a member of the committee for that sitting. When there is a lack of government members to pass a bill or to pass a section of a bill or estimates, I can see that we are not going to allow a vote to be registered against the government. Therefore, it will be merely a matter of whips getting enough members to make sure the government is supported. These members would be entitled to vote at that meeting, but the minute the meeting is over a member who may have taken issue with a certain part of a bill will still be a member of that committee with his rights completely vested in him. I should like to make that serious recommendation to the house leader because this rule introduces party discipline as part of the rules of this house and, party discipline has no place in the rules. It is a matter between the caucus and the leader.

● (3:40 p.m.)

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Ask your Prime Minister about that.

Mr. Otto: I have asked my Prime Minister about it and I am hoping he agrees with me. In fact, we have discussed it at some length. Therefore I seriously suggest that the house leader make the change I have suggested, because it would satisfy the government and also take this question out of the house.

In conclusion, may I say I am in favour of all of the rules changes. I am not afraid of