

dened to a greater degree each day by the movement toward the government considering this House as purely its own.

**Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of Treasury Board):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) with the usual respect I have always had for him and other speakers. Of course Your Honour's comment that this is really a matter of concern about the rules affecting this chamber rather than any question of privilege hold absolutely true.

I was interested in the rather outraged approach to the fact that denials for the movement of Standing Order 43 motions are always on this side of the House. I heard a very reasonable motion put forward the other day by the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Lee). After a logical explanation as to why it was urgent, it stated:

That this House condemn the artificial distinction made by the Leader of the Opposition as to North American and European Canadians, and that this House recognizes the great contribution of Canadians of European descent to our society and our nation.

That was denied. There was a no. The reasonableness was attested to by the hon. member for Edmonton Centre (Mr. Paproski) who rose in outrage saying that the no came from this side of the House. Of course it had not. It came from the opposition. In that sense, this works both ways.

**Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, what I regret most of all about this is the determination indicated once again by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) to treat this very fundamental reduction of the rights of private members of the House of Commons as an insignificant matter, a matter to which some kind of debating trick response can be deemed to be sufficient.

As has been pointed out by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), and very important for parliament, there has developed on the government side of the House the practice of designating a parliamentary secretary whose single responsibility in this House is to say or to indicate no when private members of the House of Commons raise Standing Order 43 motions to try to have the House of Commons consider matters of very serious importance to those members of parliament.

Of course it is going to occur from time to time when there is an unreasonable motion put forward, as there are from all sides of the House from time to time. It would be natural that in the face of unreasonable motions from time to time there would be members of the House who would say no because they took exception to the particular matter being proposed.

We are dealing here with a very different case. We are dealing with a regular practice of the parliamentary secretary to the leader of the government in the House of Commons. Virtually every time a motion comes from this side from a private member who wants to exercise the traditional right of a private member to have parliament consider a matter of very real importance to that private member, when that matter is put forward a representative of the Liberal government

*Privilege—Mr. Diefenbaker*

automatically says no. That is a very different situation from a matter being judged on the basis of its merits.

What we have here is a clear determination by the government to use, in a way in which the rules were never intended, the opportunity to object to a private member for party purposes, trying to stop the House of Commons from considering matters that, in the view of at least one of our members, are very important.

This becomes doubly important. It is part of a continuing process which we have seen through this decade of the limitation of the powers and rights of individual members in this House of Commons.

The other very important matter here had to do with changes with regard to the control of the estimates. No member here is able, with the rules that are now in place—I do not intend to disinter history, but it is important to bear this in mind—as a matter of practical fact to limit or control in any particular one five cent piece, if I can quote an historical phrase, spending by the Government of Canada, given the changes in rules relative to estimates.

That is a very serious restriction upon the prerogatives of an individual member of parliament. One of the few prerogatives that a private member now has is the opportunity to raise a matter of very real importance on the floor of the House of Commons and to have the possibility erected of that being debated. That has been resorted to by many members of the House of Commons. The hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) is in the chamber. On occasion he has used Standing Order 43 for a matter which I presume to be of very real personal interest to him, something he believed that the House of Commons should debate.

On these matters which are of very real concern to private members of parliament, who have few other means by which they can have their concerns considered by the House of Commons, there is one person in this House who has been given a responsibility, given a job by his party, to say no. That is the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard). That is a very serious limitation on the ability of private members to bring business to the attention of the House of Commons.

The argument has been made on the other side, and I accept its legitimacy in part, that from time to time noes have come from both sides of the House. However, any fair examination of the record will show that far more frequently matters are turned down by that side of the House. As the right hon. member for Prince Albert said, almost every day on almost every question, the no comes automatically on assignment, as the job of that particular parliamentary secretary, from the parliamentary secretary to the leader of the government. In my judgment, that is a very serious limitation upon the ability of any private member in this House which was designed not just for governments but for private members as well. It is a very serious limitation on the ability of a private member to have this House of Commons seize upon a question which that member considers to be important.