

he added that he hoped this was not done of his own knowledge, or wilfully. To my mind, this meets the requirement of the citation to which I have referred. Unless hon. members wish to carry the matter further and cite further references for my guidance, I may say that right now I am satisfied with the explanation given by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Cossitt: Mr. Chairman, may I state briefly that so far I cannot see how one can be satisfied with the statement made by the Prime Minister in this regard.

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Cossitt: He made the admission that he had used the word "fraudulently". He admits that but he adds, "However, I assume not intentionally". Mr. Chairman, "fraudulent" implies intent in every sense of the word; "fraudulent" implies crookedness; "fraudulent" implies dishonesty.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cossitt: I used statistics which he himself had supplied from his own office. If those statistics are fraudulent, they are fraudulent because he supplied them.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. member had a chance to make his case. His arguments were well supported by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Peace River. The Chair has made a decision. The only alternative at the hon. member's disposal is to appeal the ruling of the Chair.

An hon. Member: He might as well; it is a completely wasted afternoon.

Mr. Trudeau: I was coming to my point. I was saying that the changing role of the Privy Council office has been the subject of great interest and learned papers by more than one person. Mr. Robertson's paper is well worth reading and I would refer anyone who wishes to understand the increasing complexity of the Privy Council office to this particular publication.

For my part, I believe that the most basic issue which has been raised by these various questions on my estimates probably has to do with the whole system of parliamentary government and the collective responsibility. Here, I speak as one with some experience because not so long ago the government previous to this one was defeated in the House of Commons on a very basic issue. Certainly, we have learned from direct experience of the responsibility of the executive to the House of Commons.

Perhaps I do not have too many things in common with the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert, but at least in this we have similar experience: we were both leaders of a government which suffered defeat in the House of Commons; confidence having been withdrawn, we had to go to a general election. Surely, this is the basic principle. Mine was worse, perhaps, in the sense that our government was the first in this country which had ever been defeated on a budget.

Mr. Baldwin: The country never had a worse budget.

Business of Supply

Mr. Trudeau: The principle was the same, though, and no system under which this happens can be mistaken for a presidential system. Nor should we give way to the demands of the opposition to have officials appear before committees of parliament, because this would only be giving force and credence to the notion that it is the officials who make the policy and who are responsible for it, rather than members of the cabinet who, as a general rule, have to be elected by the people. So let me just indicate some ways in which changing times have called for an increase in the staff of my office.

Going back to 1968 when I became Prime Minister, I thought it was necessary to look at the functions of the Privy Council office and the function of the cabinet in the context of that particular time. Because of changing circumstances, not just in Canada but in other countries, government generally had entered a new phase of significantly larger involvement in the public sector. The demands on it for responding to the people were massive, but the decision-making process as it existed at that time had not kept pace with those demands in any meaningful way. If ministerial responsibility were to be meaningful, something had to be done.

After considerable and intense study with my colleagues and the officials who had to provide the support operation to the cabinet, we decided to change the system, to allow cabinet committees chaired by ministers to do the assessments and make the subsequent judgments which formerly had all been done in full cabinet. This would allow cabinet to focus on the final alternatives, knowing that the basic work and discussion had already taken place.

To change a system involving large numbers of people and ingrained methods is not easy and takes a bit of time, but there were valid reasons for trying. First, we wanted more decisions to be taken at the ministerial level. Second, we wanted to ensure that ministers had soundly researched alternatives from which to choose. Third, we wanted to aid ministers to make a conscious choice of priorities in the full knowledge of the real pressures which were being placed on their colleagues. Fourth, we wanted to extend dialogue between the ministers and officials, and not just officials from their own department. What we wanted was to let departmental concerns cross the borders of one department, with officials from other departments in these committees being subject to questions and participating in the discussions with ministers of other departments.

● (1610)

I have no hesitation in saying this approach has resulted in an increase in the staff of the Privy Council office, particularly in areas of planning and federal-provincial relations. It is not an abuse of growth, and in terms relative to the general annual growth in the public service it is around the norm. In fact, it has been of an order that no one could realistically suggest the Privy Council office, even combined with the Prime Minister's office, could be capable of controlling the government. I gave the figures a little earlier, Mr. Chairman.

[Translation]

I do not quite see why the Privy Council office is now being looked upon as something sinister by the hon. mem-