

Statutory Instruments

been having. But I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that it was not until the committee got to the stage at which it was going to make its report and indicated that it would be debated in the House that we had a chance to get the minister before us. For far too many months we had been completely frustrated by our incapacity to get to grips with many of the issues to which reference is made in the report.

I said earlier that we had waited 12 years before reaching our present position. Are we to wait another 12 years before the government moves to deal with the difficulties which the committee has now outlined?

● (2010)

As my hon. friend mentioned, 40 years ago there was a committee set up in the United Kingdom, the Donoughmore Committee on Ministers Powers. On page five of that committee's report there is a reference to a report of another committee set up in 1931 and I will read this interesting statement into the record because it demonstrates the whole problem:

The most distinctive indication of the change of outlook of the government of this country in recent years has been its growing preoccupation, irrespective of party, with the management of the life of the people. A study of the Statute Book will show how profoundly the conception of the function of government has altered. Parliament finds itself increasingly engaged in legislation which has for its conscious aim the regulation of the day-to-day affairs of the community, and now intervenes in matters formerly thought to be entirely outside its scope. This new orientation has its dangers as well as its merits. Between liberty and government there is an age-long conflict. It is of vital importance that the new policy while truly promoting liberty by securing better conditions of life for the people of this country, should not, in its zeal for interference, deprive them of their initiative and independence which are the nation's most valuable assets.

That was in the United Kingdom 40 years ago. In a short time I shall ask the House to consider some of the bills which the government has asked parliament to deal with in the present session to show to what extent it now proposes to intervene even more massively into the everyday affairs of the people. Consider the enormous growth and power of the civil service between 1931 and 1977. At the snap of his fingers, upon a mere whim, a civil servant can make decisions which affect the lives of thousands of people. This has become a disease, a disease which, in my opinion, is malignant, and I do not think parliament will survive much more of it.

Some of my hon. friends opposite were at a meeting in Toronto over the week end. I can understand that. I am not going to disparage it in any way. It was a thinkers' meeting. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) made one or two of his philosophical statements. It was not a successful meeting. Supporters of the government met people, thinkers, from all over Canada who came fresh to that meeting from contact with their fellow citizens, and I am sure they told the Prime Minister and the others they met that the mood of the country is not good. I suggest that members opposite should not take the Gallup Poll too seriously because it does not take that mood into question.

People are sick to death of being pushed around by bureaucrats on a day to day basis by means of regulations which they feel powerless to alter. It amounts to government, not by statute, but by order in council and by regulations about which

even many of us in this Chamber know nothing. I believe that what happened in Quebec was this: the people took a look at a government which was behaving precisely in that way; they looked over the litany of scandal, secrecy and autocracy which characterized their government, and decided to throw it out. I believe the electorate will do the same to the Government of Canada, and for the same reason.

There is no doubt about it; unless the government straightens up and cleans up the mess it has created and which lies, now, at its own doorstep, the people will get rid of it. They are fed up with things being done in the name of democracy which constitute something entirely different. Parliamentary democracy has yielded to prime-ministerial dictatorship made possible because of the ability to govern through orders in council and regulations of the kind we are considering.

I told the House earlier I would refer to instances where this is happening during the present session. At the end of last week there was a debate on \$1 items. A supply bill contained 52 \$1 items which, in many instances, would permit government officials to state the terms under which uncounted millions of dollars are to be spent. By a very wise decision, Mr. Speaker reserved the right of the House to challenge these provisions from time to time. This was not the first time such a thing had happened. Our committee has demonstrated that between 1971 and 1976 104 similar items appeared of a similar nature. I do not believe the government has altered its ways. I think it will continue doing this kind of thing.

Then there was the telecommunications bill, Bill C-43. I do not intend to outline the enabling and regulation-granting clauses of that bill, but it is a measure which removes virtually all controlling power from the CRTC and places it in the hands of the minister and the government. This is a dangerous prospect, and I do not believe the people of Canada should look lightly on a bill which gives power of that kind to a political party forming the government.

Then there is Bill C-27, the bill dealing with unemployment insurance and the changes in the department. Again more power has been taken by the minister. Some illustrations have been given already. The co-chairman of the committee has given an indication of what the Unemployment Insurance Commission was doing. It was established to our satisfaction that applicants for benefits under the act were required to show, to the satisfaction of the officials, that they had made reasonable efforts to find "comparable employment". And we were told that there were in existence secret guidelines, in the hands of officials of the Commission, by which judgment was made as to whether or not an individual had indeed made the necessary effort to secure other employment. We ourselves were not able to see those guidelines. We know they exist, though, and I think it is a disgrace that people who may well be entitled to certain benefits should be deprived of the opportunity to find out precisely what criteria they have to meet in order to become qualified.

Not long ago the amendments to the Immigration Act were dealt with. There is no question that under the Immigration Act the minister can issue directives which do not need to be