

*Business of Supply*

the antitrust act, to prevent conglomerate exploitation of Canada's consumer markets? When I hear the Opposition say things like that, I really think I am in wonderland, where white means black and no means yes.

Mr. Chairman, the basic error of the Opposition is to consider that they are Parliament. This is a false equation. Parliament is all of us, on both sides of the House. And when an act is passed by a majority of members of Parliament, that means the Canadian people in its wisdom wanted it to be so.

De Tocqueville said in his famous book *Democracy in America*:

Governments must govern.

And it is precisely what the population of this country expects. Of course, the Opposition must be strong, intelligent, efficient, and play its role fully. However, it is time for modernization in this honourable chamber, so that governments, whatever their political stripe, might present legislative programs which would really meet the wishes of the people, and have them accepted. I fully endorse the idea that debates should be limited, that once the Opposition has had the opportunity to express its views, the matter should be settled democratically, without delay, by a vote. I always wonder what is the use of hearing 30, 40 or even 50 speeches on practically the same subject. The parliamentary system in England has made much progress in that respect. Why should we refuse to avail ourselves of as modern a parliamentary system as the English have? Some seem to consider it an honour to make the House of Commons as little efficient as possible.

The hon. member for Rocky Mountain asked a question to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp). He asked in particular whether the Privy Council Office was preparing draft reforms of the parliamentary system. The form of the question seems to imply that were it so, such work would be fatal and condemnable. For my part, I deeply wish many people, both inside and outside the government, were interested in the matter. I would be particularly disappointed if the matter of parliamentary reform were one the Prime Minister did not care about. However, the Opposition seems to say that it would be disappointed to know that such is the case.

The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) launched a serious attack, a so-called serious attack, against the Prime Minister's Office. He believes that the Prime Minister's Office is used for the setting up of a parallel power structure which would turn the parliamentary system into a presidential system. The prime minister himself dealt with that question in the House earlier today. It is enough to know that the prime minister was here this afternoon, that he was willing to answer questions during more than half an hour, even though no question has been addressed to him, to conclude the contrary.

One is not a good observer . . .

Mr. McGrath: The Prime Minister did not give us the chance to ask any question!

Mr. Alexander: He did not answer any question, he left the House!

[Mr. Fox.]

Mr. Fox: The hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) is saying that the prime minister did not answer questions at that time, and he is right because the members of his party refused in a way to ask him any question during that period.

● (2010)

[English]

Mr. Alexander: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I dislike interrupting a very dull speech but I think for the record it should be noted that what I indicated is that the Prime Minister did not stay around to answer questions. He took an hour and a half to give another dull speech and then departed on the pretence of having to go some place—I think he really had to go some place but it was a planned effort on his part to see to it that no questions were asked of the government House leader.

Mr. Stanfield: With the connivance of the government House leader. His credibility is zero.

[Translation]

Mr. Fox: Mr. Chairman, of course the hon. member failed to note certain facts, for example, that it was at the request of the Opposition that the prime minister proceeded that way, and he could have been here to answer the questions and, indeed, he was here during half an hour. But there is no need to continue the discussion on that matter because in my opinion the facts are clearly on the record and particularly in today's *Hansard*.

Mr. Chairman, to return to what I said before that interruption which might not be irrelevant but surely is not relevant, the hon. member for St. John's East stated that he believed that the Prime Minister's Office was used to set up a parallel powers structure which would turn the parliamentary system into a presidential system.

But one does not have to be a very keen observer to note that the main feature of the Trudeau government has been to set up machinery and structures which would allow the men elected by the people to govern for a period of four years, to really control the huge federal bureaucracy instead of being controlled by the system.

When one considers objectively the cabinet committee system described by the Clerk of the Privy Council which the hon. member for Rocky Mountain referred to this afternoon, when one considers the funds made available to all federal parties for research purposes, when one considers the funds made available to members in order to help them do a better job, one can only conclude that there is a real effort to ensure that members of parliament, and that includes the government, can fulfill their task better.

Listening to the opposition, one rather has the impression that they seek a weakening of the Canadian executive. Would that really be in the interest of this country? For my part, I do not I think so. We need a strong executive to face the problems of contemporary society. And I think there is no incompatibility at that level. In our system, it is a challenge to be met so as to have both a strong executive and a House of Commons that can still fulfill its task.

The hon. member for Saint John's East also talked about the roster system.