

merely a subterfuge for asking for extraordinary and unparliamentary powers.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Douglas:** The fact is that technocrats, and I certainly include the President of the Treasury Board in that class, tend to become autocrats. They have little or no appreciation or understanding of the parliamentary process in a democratic society. If giving these sweeping powers to the cabinet is going to make for greater efficiency, it is logical to argue that Parliament be sent home, then, the President of the Treasury Board and the other technocrats could run the whole government of Canada. I say to members opposite that this steady and continuous erosion of the powers of the elected representatives and ignoring the role of Parliament in our democratic system is something they will live to regret.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Douglas:** Many articles have been written in recent months pointing out that the Prime Minister of Canada is moving more and more toward a presidential system and that increasing powers are being vested in the hands of the Prime Minister. It is no longer a case of *prima inter pares*. It is a case of one man seeking to exercise more and more power at the expense of Parliament.

It is significant that the Prime Minister, who is sponsoring this bill, is not even here. When I asked him a few weeks ago if he would undertake to be present when we were discussing these particular sections, he said he would be here. He is not here. He, alone, is in a position to say to Parliament why he wants these extraordinary powers, the use he intends to make of them, what ministers of state he intends to appoint and what particular functions will be given to these ministries of state. He ought to be able to tell us whether these ministries of state will deal with temporary problems or whether he intends to use the powers in this bill to set up virtually permanent departments, such as a ministry of housing and urban affairs. Housing and urban affairs is not a temporary matter. If the government sets up a ministry of housing and urban affairs, I serve notice that in my opinion it will be a complete violation of clause 14 in Part IV of this bill.

The fact that the Prime Minister completely ignores the committee of the whole, has taken no part in the debate and has not seen fit in any of the preceding stages to outline the reasons for seeking powers which have never been granted to any Prime Minister in the history of Canada, indicates a contempt for Parliament. That contempt has not only been indicated by his absence from this committee, but it has been indicated by a number of actions which he has taken. As a matter of fact, in any democratic country, not even the president has the authority to allocate powers and duties unless such action is based on statutes enacted by the elected representatives.

In the United States, a cabinet minister has to be ratified by congress. The department over which any cabinet minister presides is based on statutes passed by

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congress. He exercises powers which have been approved and passed by congress.

**Mr. Drury:** Do you want to move to the presidential system?

**Mr. Douglas:** No, I am not suggesting that we move to the presidential system. What I am saying to the President of the Treasury Board is that we are in great danger of getting the worst features of both. We are going to get the presidential system without the controls and power to exercise restraint which are available to the United States congress. We will have neither the benefits of the Parliamentary system nor the restricted measures and restraints of the United States Congress.

This legislation is being rammed through the House. Opposition protests are being ignored with respect to the matter of setting up ministries of state. In the main, the government members have remained silent. We have heard no protests from them.

**An hon. Member:** They want a piece of the action.

**Mr. Douglas:** I suppose many of them hope to be appointed ministers of state or parliamentary secretaries. This committee would do well to stop and think of the long-term repercussions which will evolve from the step we are now being asked to take. The government wants to have a flexible response. There is certainly a case to be made for being able to deal with certain matters and to have certain ministers allocated to deal with specific problems. The government has the power to appoint ministers without portfolio and to give them specific jobs to do.

We have been asking for a long time that a department of housing and urban affairs be established. The government can bring in legislation to set up such a department. This would enable the members of this House to discuss the role of such a department, the powers that would be given to it and the duties of the minister in charge of the department. That would be the proper way to do it. However, when the government asks for the power to set up a department of housing and urban affairs or any other department on its own initiative on the subterfuge that this is merely a temporary organization, the government is seeking in a round about way to bypass Parliament and to nullify the powers of Parliament.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Douglas:** On this question, members in all parts of the House have a serious responsibility to look into the long-term effects of this measure and to speak out on them. As the powers of Parliament are curtailed and as the voice of the elected representatives is muzzled, so the democratic process suffers.

• (3:50 p.m.)

We might as well face the fact, Mr. Chairman, that there is a growing body of opinion among youth today that parliamentary democracy is irrelevant; that the parliamentary system has had its day. I do not believe that.