

Business of Supply

I know my time is limited; therefore let me make this point. I suggest that hon. members who are interested in this question should look at the recent issue of the *London Sunday Times* which has printed extensive excerpts from the diary of Richard Crossman, one of the most competent and knowledgeable leaders in two of the last three Labour governments of Great Britain. They will see what he says about the importance of senior civil servants; that it is they who can make or break a program. They can rewrite a speech. Not only can they rewrite speech, but they do. Sometimes the speech a minister makes does not support his own housing policy but supports the policy of the former government.

My point is not that we do not need senior civil servants, not that we do not need government intervention in the lives of Canadians. In this complex day and age it is increasingly important for the government to become involved. My point is that we ought to, and must, have control of the system. I say the system is out of control; that the increase in the number of bureaucrats or senior civil servants is not justified; that this government has not found a way to control such growth; and that the growth of the bureaucracy is continuing and accelerating. I say that members of parliament and the public have a right to know. Instead of adopting the sort of guidelines the Prime Minister spoke about and which were adopted a couple of years ago, which simply legitimize, so to speak, the government's policy of not making public important information, I say we should look closely at the Swedish system in which every document, every state paper, every study is made public immediately unless there are special reasons why this should not be done. Those are the kinds of questions we ought to have debated today. I am sorry to note that we have not even touched on them.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): Mr. Chairman, I regret that because of the excessive time taken by the Prime Minister in speaking, he is not now in the chamber to answer questions which I and other members on my side of the House wish to put to him. That, unfortunately, is a typical performance by the Prime Minister who talks so much about being in the House and being responsible to members of parliament who have questions to put to him. The only time he stays in the House to receive questions is during the question period when the rules and his own particular style of not answering protect him from questions, however effective, put by members on my side of the House.

The contemptuous display by the Prime Minister today is in violation—I say this with some anger because I was involved in the discussions that I thought set the ground rules for the discussion today—of the understanding that we on this side had when we agreed to extend to the Prime Minister the courtesy of leading off. We were given to understand that he would use that courtesy, make a short address outlining some of the functions of the office which reports only to him, and answer questions. His abusing that courtesy and speaking for three times as long as he stayed to answer questions in the House shows that he is a Prime Minister who holds this House and his responsibilities to it in very low regard.

Mr. Cullen: That is absolute nonsense, and you know it.

[Mr. Orlikow.]

An hon. Member: That was an American style filibuster.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): I want to make one quick reference to the question of responsible government which was dwelt upon by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister suggested that he and his colleagues in cabinet are responsible to the House of Commons because once, on a rare occasion, he was defeated on a budget motion and an election was called. But the fact remains, and it is clear to the Prime Minister and anybody else in the House who will admit it, that there is no kind of day to day control by members of the House over the government. In a majority position they are going to do what they like until there is an election.

Mr. Cullen: The government is always responsible.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): There is responsibility when elections occur, but that is responsibility to an electorate. I suggest that is a system which appears to have much more in common with the traditions of the United States presidential system than with the traditional system of responsible government which we have known.

I want to deal with some of the functions of those highly mysterious offices, the Prime Minister's office and the Privy Council office. It is noteworthy that the Prime Minister, who came here presumably to filibuster instead of to answer questions, did not even spend most of his filibuster dealing with the operation of the PCO and PMO. He spent most of his filibuster trying to answer the right hon. member for Prince Albert, even though the right hon. gentleman was not in the House, and others.

Mr. Boulanger: He was answering questions; you know that.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): He put his answers on record in the right hon. gentleman's absence. But I am interested in the organization of the Privy Council office. I regret to have to come back to the minister who holds no responsibility in this. We have discussed the matter previously in the standing committee. I have read the document written by Mr. Robertson. I have read whatever else has been published on the subject and written, however carefully, about the functions of that office. I certainly understand the importance and validity of change. As times change, as needs change there is a necessity for change in the way government responds.

I recognize the need for an office performing a coordinating function at the centre of government. It seems to me, and I put this to the acting prime minister, that as the system is now arranged the Privy Council office is designed to bring in everyone but parliament. Privy Council officers come from and go back to various line departments. Ministers sit on specialist cabinet committees, but parliament has to fight to get a minister to defend the estimates. Then we get a minister before the committee who starts off by saying, as my leader and other colleagues indicated earlier, that he does not have responsibility for the estimates we are considering.

We cannot bring before us the deputy minister who does have that responsibility, and we are able to get the respon-