

Supply

come to this House do so with the utmost sincerity and integrity, and all of us have a certain amount of talent and special ability, and if individual members are prevented from seeing that kind of talent used, we will all be the poorer for it. So I would like to urge all of us in this House to take seriously the suggestions made here today and that we go forward in a spirit of good will to see that some of the useful and worth-while suggestions made here today do not end up as simple rhetoric to be referred to by future scholars, but rather that something very useful and worth while comes out of this debate today.

Mr. David Smith (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate. It is a subject in which I am quite interested, and given the events of recent days I think we all feel it is quite timely and we hope we can come to some consensus on improvements which might be made with regard to parliamentary reform.

I think it is fair to say that in recent years the government has demonstrated a genuine interest in parliamentary reform in several ways. Such things as the introduction of television, the very active role which special committees have played in the last couple of years—and I will speak a little more about that later—and the facilities which are now available to members compared to what they were some years ago, I think indicate a genuine commitment on the part of the government to parliamentary reform. I remember that in the mid-1960s you would see a couple of members and a couple of secretaries jammed into one little room. The working environment was quite intolerable and the work output tended to reflect that. Now, however, we have well funded research staffs for the various parties, which I think has gone some way to improving the conditions under which Parliament operates.

I have to say that I have some doubt about the sincerity of some members opposite, and I say "some" because, for example, the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) has a genuine interest in and commitment to parliamentary reform. But because of some of the hijinks which have occurred here in the last couple of weeks, things that I can only describe as guerrilla tactics, we were prevented from doing what we were elected to do, that is to say debate, ask questions, answer questions, discuss legislation, move amendments and vote on them, and, in the final analysis, vote on the legislation. I am mystified as to how that blockade is somehow justified in the name of hoping to bring about parliamentary reform. I think that, coming hard on the heels of the hijacking we saw during the Constitution debate when we heard a hundred-odd spurious questions of privilege and points of order, it is a little difficult to accept as genuine the interest in parliamentary reform of everyone on the other side.

An hon. Member: You are perfect, aren't you.

Mr. Smith: I think it is very important that we all bear in mind the function and role of the opposition and the government in a parliamentary democracy. That is why we on this side of the House felt quite strongly that one principle on which we were not prepared to give in the recent war of wills, if you can call it that, is that it is the obligation and duty of the government to set the legislative priorities of the House. That

is something on which we will have to go to the people to justify whether or not we have properly managed our mandate and whether we have set those legislative priorities in accordance with the wishes of the majority. If we have not, we know the political consequences which can flow from that when we have an election. However, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it is a perversion of parliamentary democracy to suggest that somehow the opposition, which is in the minority, through an abuse of what is a tradition, not even a rule, can prevent Parliament from functioning in the way I think it is supposed to function.

I must say also that I regretted a couple of the references that were made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) today to things which I think really do not add a constructive tone to this debate. He referred, for example, to the emergency planning order. In recent days I think some people have tried to damage the integrity of the government by exploiting this and presenting a version of that order which is totally contrary to the facts. I regret to say that I think the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition did that today when he said the government had given itself the authority to set up internment camps. Nothing could be further from the truth. The only conclusion I can come to is that he has never read the emergency planning order because if he does he will see in Section 3 that it says:

Every minister appointed to preside over a department or responsible for the administration of an agency of the Crown or a Crown corporation shall

(a) be responsible for the identification of possible types of emergencies within or directly related to his area of responsibility and for the preparation, evaluation, testing and implementation, when required, of appropriate related emergency plans and arrangements;

Now, in a document prepared for me by the research branch of the Library of Parliament which is entitled "The Validity of the Emergency Planning Order" it states:

The provisions of the order require the various ministries to develop plans which are to include methods of implementation. This includes preparation for implementation. The order does not purport to authorize the implementation of the plans so prepared.

Going on further, the document says:

In summary, the order requires various government ministries to develop plans for emergencies and prepare for the implementation of such plans. However, there are no provisions which, properly characterized, amount to authorizing the implementation of the plans.

In order to implement these plans legislation would be required, and I would suggest the Leader of the Opposition knows that full well. I regret that he has chosen to paint a picture of what is happening here in Parliament which I suggest is, in fact, very misleading. He is doing it for political purposes, but I do not think it is constructive in a serious debate on parliamentary reform.

He referred today to the number of orders in council which this government has passed. To listen to him you would come to the conclusion that there is something inherently wrong with orders in council, that there is something evil about them. It should be pointed out that an order in council has to be issued pursuant to the authority of some act. Now, you would get the