

*Procedure and Organization*

Well, we are not buying it. During the past year there have been certain evolutionary developments, some of them quite noticeable and some not so noticeable. But a trend certainly is discernible, a trend toward an absolute power cell control, more centralized control by the central committee, control by the troika, ultimate, absolute control. That is the plan. The first step already has been taken. That was to muzzle the government backbenchers. The second step is to muzzle the opposition. The third step is under way right now—to control the press. They have already pretty well got the C.B.C. and certain other press people and reporters who have prostituted themselves, but thank God there still remains a corps of dedicated independent reporters and publishers who tell it as it is.

The press can see the trend. Members of the press were rebuked in London and lately they have been blamed for not properly explaining the government's languages bill. Indeed the Prime Minister has felt constrained to write an explanation himself.

● (3:20 p.m.)

Another development over the years has been increased committee activity. Every member has had to serve on at least two committees. The committees have met at all hours and dealt with any number of subjects. Some committees even travelled across the country on fact finding missions, so-called. But one thing that became abundantly clear was that the emphasis put on committees had but one purpose in mind, and that was to keep the "silent service" occupied.

The real reason for the great emphasis on committees did not actually become apparent at first, though it soon became obvious. We were told that matters would be referred to committees where the less formal nature of the proceedings would elicit more information. We were told greater opportunity would be given to examine witnesses. In effect it was said that the committee system would do such a thorough job of examination as to guarantee much closer scrutiny of witnesses and documents. This would make it much easier to modify legislation or to effect amendments. Then, hopefully, when a committee reported to the house its report would merely need rubberstamping by the whole house.

With such a promotional scheme under way I am told there was great competition among hon. members opposite to be appointed committee chairmen. The committee system had a new look and was going to revolutionize the

old House of Commons. We were going to resemble the U.S. Congress, and the hopefuls opposite imagined headlines similar to those that appear in the U.S. press. For example, they imagined a headline like this: "Senator Upjohn"—or some such person—"chairman of the all-powerful committee on ways and means, said today that if the executive did not agree to his demands he would withhold his committee's support from the President's anti-poverty program".

Our backbench friends opposite pictured themselves in this light. If only they could get the nod and be appointed committee chairmen they would become power brokers, forces to be reckoned with. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the rumour, but I am told some of them even considered taking elocution lessons so they could cut records, as Senator Everett Dirksen does. As a consolation prize those who did not make the grade were invited to intimate luncheons at 24 Sussex Drive.

I now return to rule 75c. Did this dream world of which I have spoken materialize? I guess not. The heroes, those who became chairmen, were given a certain bill, their material and kit of instructions, and were told to follow those instructions. They were told to vote the party line, to accept no amendments or changes. This is what the triumvirate had decided was best.

Although these chairmen have their committees, one thing the government neglected to give them was authority. Rule 75c will further emasculate them. If the backbenchers opposite were not so naive they would be a disillusioned lot by now. They would have realized that all the committee system has accomplished is to keep the silent service occupied so no embarrassment is caused. It was impossible to avoid embarrassment with such an awkward squad, but the purpose of the exercise was that the embarrassment to the executive caused by the Trudeau coat-tail riders would be minimized.

The troika knew that the election posters bearing the inscription "Come work with me", and showing a surrealist picture of the Prime Minister urging Canadians to join him, had attracted a lot of political neophytes, people who were long on ideas but short on common sense and practical judgment. What should the government do with these people? It decided to keep them busy on committees but cautioned them to accept no amendments because the troika knew what was best.