

Procedure and Organization

believe 150 members of this house could accept as a good thing the fact that parliament must now be responsible to government rather than the reverse. Further, the government house leader surely has himself in a most inconsistent position. He has already told us he does not like certain elements of these rule changes as reported by the committee. In fact, on his own initiative he attempted to make changes in order to clarify the situation. Now, he tells us he really does not care that much, but if we can somehow bring this debate to a conclusion the government will accept the rule changes as recommended and perhaps at some later date they can do what they wanted to do in the first place. He is asking us to accept something which is unacceptable to members on all sides of the house.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): How can he consider that we or anyone will believe he is acting in a rational or responsible manner when he tells us today he is now ready to accept something he was not prepared to accept a week ago.

Mr. Stanfield: Drunk with power.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): One of the issues at stake seems to be that we want to make more meaningful what we do in this chamber. That, of course, means making our debates more meaningful. Yet under this proposal we will be forced to accept, in a little more than a day's time, a rule which will provide for a forum which will be not more meaningful but less meaningful because we will in effect be saying that debate no longer makes any difference. The important thing probably will be programming, so that everything will fall within a certain period of time.

Mr. Stanfield: So we can sell more wheat.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): The problem, for the government at least, seems to be that we have not been able to allocate and nail down in advance all the necessary time periods required to put through a certain series of legislation. How, if one really believes debate in this chamber is to be meaningful, can one come to that conclusion? That is not an invitation to dialogue but rather to monologue. When the government chooses to unilaterally determine cut-off time for debate and there is no agreement, then debate in that situation cannot be considered to be meaningful.

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

The Prime Minister referred to this debate as being a stupid filibuster. Under the government's proposal, a debate on that basis will become a filibuster. That to my mind will do little to ennoble this place or make it function effectively as suggested by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford).

Mr. Stanfield: Where is he?

An hon. Member: He is not here.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): The government suggests that what is needed here is efficiency. They believe parliament has not been efficient.

An hon. Member: Hear, hear.

Another hon. Member: We know you just want your vacation.

Mr. Bell: Go to Florida.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I am really amazed to discover that apparently many people on the government side believe efficiency is the basic criterion for the proper functioning and effectiveness of this place. I suppose they make the equation that the number of bills passed directly equals how good the government is. I think that kind of reasoning is sophistic to say the least, and is highly fallacious.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Naturally, this might be desirable in a totalitarian régime, but surely that is not what we want in this place.

An hon. Member: One of the troika is over there.

Another hon. Member: The one with the big grin.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): One must conclude for one reason or another that the government really does not understand what parliament is. Not only that, although that is bad enough, but what makes it even worse—and I again refer to the suggestion of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs—is that one must assume they do not even understand what democracy is all about.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): It is not really rules which make parliament work. If the