

insist on a silencer, just as today they are insisting on a quiet kind of closure, but we will not let them get away with it.

From personal discussions I know that a good many backbenchers on the government side, particularly newer members, are impatient with debate in this chamber. I would like to make three comments about that. Some members on the other side take the attitude that the government was elected in a general election, that it was given power for four years, given the authority of the people of Canada to settle everything and to govern for a period of four years. In their view, therefore, the government goes ahead and governs, and debate in the House of Commons is irrelevant. In effect the members opposite who hold this view—it is not held by all of them but by some—wish to scrap the parliamentary system of responsible government. It is just as simple as that. They may mean well but they are a menace to a free society.

Second, Mr. Speaker, some hon. members opposite are bored with the debates that take place in the house, partly because they cannot take part in them and partly because they feel they have not been involved by the government in any meaningful role in parliament. Therefore they are bored; therefore they are impatient with the time debate takes in the House of Commons. Through you, sir, I want to tell them that parliament was not designed for their convenience, was not really designed to provide entertainment or interest for them. The purpose of parliament, of this house, is to expose the proposals of the government to examination and debate and, where necessary, to criticism, to provide time for the public to become informed and to react to proposals the government is putting forward to be enacted into law.

● (3:40 p.m.)

To hon. members opposite who are impatient with debate in the house I say that proposed rule 75c will not accomplish what they want to be accomplished. Rule 75c will not in fact reduce the average length of debates in the house. It will enable the government to chop off some debates which it may be very important to have continued, but 75c will not enable the government to reduce the average length of debate. Indeed, if the government passes 75c and resorts to it the chances are this will provoke debate in the house on many occasions which would not otherwise be used for such debate. The only way the aim of increasing further the stand-

ard of debate in the house can be achieved, and the only way in which the effectiveness of the house can be further increased, is through co-operation and through the adoption of rules which carry the support of the house generally. Such rules were adopted last December.

I say with all sincerity that 75c will not accomplish the purposes of members opposite who are impatient with debate in the house.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: I am afraid some hon. gentlemen opposite have been misled. Rule 75c should not be adopted, first, because it will not achieve the purposes some of the backbenchers have in mind. It will not achieve the purpose the President of the Privy Council says he has in mind of enabling the government to get through a bigger program. I do not think any experienced parliamentarian could really stand up in the house and say that the passage of 75c will in fact effectively enable the government to get through a bigger legislative program. All it will do will be to put the house on a collision course.

Hon. members opposite may have noticed an event which took place in the British House of Commons yesterday as a result of the application of the guillotine. I do not expect to be throwing things at the President of the Privy Council. I have too few things I would want to waste in that way. But this is the sort of thing which is provoked even in one of the most civilized parliaments in the world. Rule 75c will not do what the government is suggesting. It will simply cause a deterioration in the effectiveness of parliament.

Second, in any event the government has not shown the need really for getting more done. It has not shown the need for a drastic reform in this house of parliament in order to get any important program through the house. I would ask any hon. gentleman opposite what important program parliament has held up. One of the great problems in this country today is that of constitutional reform. Has parliament held up the progress of constitutional reform? We all know that parliament has been kept out of the discussions on constitutional reform because of the narrowly partisan attitude of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) toward the question. Discussion has been going on for over a year and a half. What is there to show for it? Now that it appears that the Prime Minister and the government are to be involved in an imminent failure with regard to their consultations in