

engaged, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre once said, in the process of political warfare. Perhaps we could be spared these statements that inevitably by some kind of heaven-sent co-operation or circumstance that we will always arrive at the best decision in relation to the best dispatch of public business. I don't think anyone believes that.

Let me reply to some of the objections that have been made to the proposed standing order 16A. I think they can be summarized under three headings; the so called quorum of one argument; the so called unilateral decision of the house leader argument, and the essence of programming itself. First, let us refer to the so called quorum of one.

In essence the suggestion has been made which imputes bad faith on my part in respect of meetings with house leaders, that I will have separate unilateral meetings. It has been suggested that I myself may ultimately persuade myself to take a certain course of action. I think it is perfectly clear that I will not follow that course of action, as suggested by hon. members opposite, not only because I think it is not a moral course of action but also because it happens to be politic. The hon. member suggests that if there is a quorum of one this will automatically and necessarily take place. I do not think that the quorum of one will ever happen so long as house leaders on the opposition side do not voluntarily absent themselves from the meetings of house leaders.

• (9:50 p.m.)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): In case there is a suggestion that there is anything imaginary in the concern which led us to put this particular provision in the standing order, let me remind hon. members of the time not too many years ago when the house leader of the official opposition—not the present gentleman but another one—was in effect refusing to participate in meetings of house leaders and it was not possible to call these meetings.

Mr. Nesbitt: Tell us why he did not participate.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): You tell us why he did not participate. And will it happen again? Perhaps it will.

Mr. Nowlan: There is a new politics.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): There is a new politics on this side.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

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Motion for Concurrence in Report

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): We know the kind of people we are dealing with on that side.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I do not say it in any—

Mr. Monteith: It is the same arrogant approach.

Mr. Nowlan: From the same old wagon.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The President of the Privy Council has the floor.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I will not be provocative.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Monteith: That is something new for you.

Mr. Lewis: The President of the Privy Council is arguing with himself, no doubt. What does he think of his argument?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I hope the hon. member will think that the better side may just win.

Mr. Lewis: I don't know.

Mr. Baldwin: We are not sure yet.

Mr. Lewis: Would it be your alter ego?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Which one is my alter ego? Second, I refer to the suggestion that the decision of the government house leader will really be a single-man decision which will enforce itself on the house. I have heard the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) make some very skilful arguments in this house from time to time, but he has made no more skilful argument than the one he made on the assumption that the action by the government house leader would be contrary to section 49 of the British North America Act. Section 49 of that act says:

Questions arising in the House of Commons shall be decided by a majority of voices other than that of the Speaker—

That is exactly what we are proposing in standing order 16A. We are proposing that a recommendation should be made and the house should decide this question, as with other questions that may be before the house, and should decide it with a view to the best dispatch of public business. May I suggest