

Procedure and Organization

I have tried hard to understand the government's position in this respect. I have listened to a great deal of the debate and read much more of it in *Hansard*. Why should the government have insisted on closure and on ramming this meaningless, unworkable rule down the throat of parliament, thereby inviting chaos in future sessions of this parliament? Would the Canadian people have lost anything if the committee had been asked to study the matter further and bring in a rule that made sense? Would the Canadian people have lost anything, would this parliament have lost anything, if we had adjourned and the government had taken the time to clean up this rule and to make at least the changes which the President of the Privy Council said must be made? I suggest that the answer is obviously no.

It would have been a sensible, responsible attitude of any government and any Prime Minister who did not believe in his divine right to govern and were not determined to impose their will on parliament, though that imposition made no sense even from their point of view. They were just going to show the opposition who is boss here. I can see no other purpose. When I look across this aisle from time to time—I say this not too offensively, I hope—and observe the disdain with which the Prime Minister treats parliament, and the way he looks at us in the opposition, I often say to myself: There but for the grace of Pierre Elliott Trudeau sits God.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lewis: He sits there stern and severe, Mr. Speaker. Why do this to the house? Why create the atmosphere which is here now? What does participatory democracy mean, if I may use that favourite phrase? Does it mean merely the possibility of some people saying something some time at the will of the Prime Minister or a minister of the crown? What are our young people in Canada crying out for? Are they crying out merely for the opportunity to have a meeting—

An hon. Member: They are not crying out for you, anyway.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lewis: Are they crying out merely for an opportunity to have a minister of the Crown, the leader of my party or the leader of the Conservative party appear at a meeting to speak to them? Participatory democracy, in

[Mr. Lewis.]

any genuine sense, means giving people an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process of the country, giving them an opportunity to feel that the environment in which they live is one they have helped to fashion. Apply that to this parliament. Are not the members of this house as entitled to that kind of participatory democracy as anyone else in Canada? Is it not our duty to be a part of the decision-making process of parliament? And is a decision made merely by a vote? Surely, not!

● (8:50 p.m.)

Surely, it is a most simplistic and idiotic idea to say that a decision is made only by a vote. The process of decision making is more complicated than that. It is an exchange of ideas. It is listening to other proposals. It is producing a program which emanates from both sides of the house. This is what is now to be in the hands of the government alone under rule 75c. That is why we say it is a bad thing.

Many years ago I said at a meeting in one city in the country that in my view the days when parliament was a bear pit where the government and the opposition faced each other in battle are gone. Nowadays, parliament has more positive things to do and must play a more constructive role.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It is most difficult to hear the hon. member's speech when there are these interjections.

Mr. Lewis: I think I can say without immodesty that, perhaps on many occasions in this parliament, I have shown that not only do I believe in the constructive work that must be done in parliament but I think I have participated in it. I think I can point without shame to my participation in the parliamentary committee dealing with collective bargaining for the public service and I think I can point without shame to my participation in the special committee on the official languages bill, to mention only two things. But I do not believe that the constructive work of parliament can be done by an unenforceable law. Every law which is not enforceable is a bad law. I do not believe that the constructive work of parliament can be done if the government is to have every right in its hands.

Mr. Speaker: I regret I have to interrupt the hon. member but his time expired a few moments ago. He can continue with the agreement of the house.