

*House of Commons Procedures*

part of the motion indicates what can be done when the Government genuinely considers changes and modifications which are suggested by the Opposition.

Here I should like to make a comment, as did the hon. Member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Rhéaume), regarding the press gallery and particularly the press media of Canada. I believe they have been most unfair in reporting the general attitude of the Official Opposition toward the changes proposed in the rules of this House by the Government. The first speech made on behalf of the Official Opposition was that of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) on May 20. I listened very carefully to that speech and to me the gist of it was that the proposals made by the Government did not go far enough, that reform of the procedures of this House was necessary but that the measures proposed by the Government were not effective. This was the general impression created on me by the speech of the Leader of the Opposition. The next day the news indicated in effect that the Official Opposition were opposing the proposed reforms of the House. This line taken by the news media follows upon careful and clever preparation by the Liberal party in advance of introducing these reforms.

The Government is aware of the fact, as are we, that at this time the Parliament of Canada is held in rather low repute by the people of Canada. The people consider that it is necessary for the House to become more effective and that therefore changes to make it more effective are necessary. The Government is making use of this general attitude of the people in trying to push through reforms, some of which are not good. Probably 90 per cent or more of the reforms proposed by the Government, Mr. Speaker, are acceptable to us. Most of them would be even more acceptable were the major reform proposed by the Leader of the Opposition of the establishment of a permanent Speaker agreed to by the Government. In that event many of the proposals of the Government would become more acceptable to us.

The second part of the motion concerns what is commonly referred to as the guillotine proposal. Briefly, it provides that a Business Committee shall be set up with one Member to be selected by each party of the House. This Business Committee shall allocate time for any item of legislation or business to be brought before the House.

[Mr. Chatterton.]

If the recommendation of this Committee is not unanimous, then a Minister may introduce a motion to limit time which is debatable for one day. This motion would put a limit on the debate of the particular item of business of not less than five days made up of two days for second reading, two days for the Committee stage and one day for third reading. This motion could also restrict the time of the speeches of Members of this House.

I might say that I think it would be most necessary, in view of such allocation of the time of individual speakers, to make special allowance for the length of the speeches of the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) and the Leader of the Opposition, both of whom are officers of the House, and for the Minister who introduces the particular item of business and the Member of the Opposition who replies thereto.

As the hon. Member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) has pointed out, a two-day debate with a limitation of 20 minutes per speaker would allow only 42 Members of the House to speak. If a five-day limitation were applied only some 100 Members of the House, assuming no Member spoke twice at a different stage of the debate, would be allowed to speak on the question. Thus 160 Members would be silenced.

As a backbencher I will be one of those 160. Many Members on the other side, particularly the backbenchers, will be included in those who will be silenced. Last week three or four Liberal backbenchers spoke of their concern for the rights of the backbenchers. I think they should consider the situation where some 160 Members of this House could be silenced by the introduction of the guillotine.

• (9:50 p.m.)

The amendment moved by the hon. Member for Saint John-Albert (Mr. Bell) is to the effect that the motion introduced by the Minister to allocate time and apply the guillotine shall not be effected unless 60 per cent of the Members present in the House approve of such motion. I think I can claim credit for being the author of this idea. So far as I know, I was the first to suggest it to this side of the House.

The President of the Privy Council (Mr. McLraith) objected on Friday on the grounds that this would be in contravention of Section 49 of the British North America Act