

*Procedure and Organization*

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, in the *Financial Times*, on April 7 last as well as on July 7, 1969, the following could be read and I quote:

[English]

It is clear that what is still needed is an orderly flow of legislation through the system. The only way to ensure this is to set progressive deadlines for bills at each stage. These deadlines need not be inflexible, but they should be postponed only in special cases.

[Translation]

● (9:10 p.m.)

I go on quoting.

[English]

There will be cries, of course, that this is anti-democratic. In fact, the ability of the opposition to influence policy is greater, because of the increased use of committees, than it was before. The rules will not really be reformed until there is time allocation. And until then, Parliament will not be prepared to meet the demands on it in this fast moving and difficult age.

[Translation]

And on July 7 last, Mr. Speaker, one could read this:

[English]

The genius of parliamentary government should be to ensure that all legislation is open to criticism by any minority, that it is examined as fully as it can be and that it always carries the assent of the majority. But it is also to ensure that the important business of the nation is attended to.

The rights of adequate debate are very thoroughly safeguarded—in some respects too thoroughly—in the procedural proposals now before parliament. What is still lacking, but is partially provided in Rule 75c, is some means of providing (as we put it on April 7 this year) "an orderly flow of legislation through the system".

The basic problem of the House of Commons is no different from the problem which faces all of us—how best to use a limited amount of time. The new use of Committees and the increased number of opposition days have already given the opposition more chance than it ever had to influence legislation. What it is now claiming is the right to stage a sit-in or a teach-in whenever it likes. And that is the negation of orderly government.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I shall not go on quoting but I want to draw your attention to the fact that the new proposal of the committee differs from that which was made in December, which provided only for the establishment of a business committee made up of the representatives of the various parties. At that time, even prior to debate and whether there was unanimous consent or not, a minister of the crown was allowed to propose a motion providing for a time allocation for one or

several stages and for one or several bills at one time.

I do not intend to come back over details about standing orders 75A, 75B, and 75c which have been very clearly explained this afternoon, especially by the chairman of the committee, the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Blair). I would however, like to draw the attention of the house to the fact that standing order 75c will only be used in the last resort, when no agreement has been reached under orders 75A and 75B. My contention is that there will always be an agreement if the opposition is as sensible as it claims to be. It will not be possible to invoke it in advance but once the debate has begun, its use will be limited to one stage only and also to only one bill.

The use of this method will certainly take more time than the minimum period of 10 days and in contrast to what was said this afternoon, the opposition will have all the time and all the means to warn the public against any measure that it would deem harmful or dangerous.

I am convinced that most opposition members realize the necessity of this procedure but since we have not yet reached here the same degree of political maturity as in England, for instance, we will hear the same old stories to the effect that democracy is in danger, that parliament will disappear and so on, while we are not denying the right to discuss, the freedom of speech. We only want to put an end to the endless discussions and to the repetitions which rather discredit Parliament and which the Canadians of today do not accept any more.

It is obvious that the government, in its own interest will do all it can and will make all the reasonable concessions to proceed by agreement, before using rule 75c in the extreme cases which will probably be even scarcer because of this rule.

What must be avoided above all is that a small minority can prevent almost indefinitely a majority elected by the people to adopt the measures that are necessary for the welfare and the progress of that nation during the time which is still necessarily limited for the discussion of public business.

Mr. Speaker, among the democratic parliaments of free countries we are almost the only one that has not yet adopted any rule to restrict the length of debates. I would even say that democracy is not yet in danger, nor has it disappeared in the countries which