

Nelson River Power Development

connection, because I do not want to see the representatives of any minority group, particularly the independents, abolished by a rather unscrupulous attempt by the members across the way to cut off valid sections of the Canadian population from the opportunity of expressing their opinions in this house.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps the hon. member used a word that went beyond his thoughts when he referred to the "unscrupulous" attempt made by the opposition. I have no doubt that the word was used in a very general sense and that no one will insist that it be amended at this time.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, I simply wish to put on record, or to recall for hon. members, a sentence that will always remain famous; in fact, it was once spoken here, in this house, and I believe it should be repeated on the occasion of this debate.

It was spoken in October 1963 by the present right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker), when he said: "I do not agree with your ideas, but I will fight to death to assure you the right to express them."

Mr. Speaker, such an example of democratic spirit and freedom of speech should help you to arrive at a decision on the question at hand. Canada is under a democratic system where any idea may be expressed. A substantial part of the Canadian people have selected representatives from different parties to express their views in the house. That is why I believe third parties also should be entitled to express their opinions on motions introduced before the house, particularly in view of the fact that the Conservative party, while it may have the largest number of opposition members, does not speak in the name of all the opposition and in many cases, our ideas vary on different subjects. They speak on their own behalf, but not in the name of the third parties.

For these reasons, I believe that in the future as in the past, you should allow third parties to speak on motions.

[English]

Hon. G. J. McIlraith (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear from the discussion which has taken place that the point of order raised is a difficult one. It is also quite evident, if I may comment on some of the discussion, that this debate has gone

[Mr. Reid.]

beyond the point at issue, which is a narrow one as to the interpretation of the meaning of a rule. I suggest that now the point has been raised specifically, it be taken under advisement and a decision given later after there is an opportunity to prepare a carefully reasoned decision on the point.

Some hon. Members: Do it now.

• (3:10 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Allard (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I should like to add just one word. On behalf of the hon. member for Three Rivers (Mr. Mongrain) and myself, I endorse the remarks made by the hon. members of the New Democratic party, the Ralliement créditiste and the Social Credit party about the right of members of third parties to speak. Since the beginning of this session, in spite of the good will and good faith shown by the Speaker and his assistants, the chairman and the deputy chairman of the committees of the whole house, efforts are being made to restrain the number of members from the third parties, and we are against that. I must point out also that we, the two independent members in this parliament, represent more than a hundred thousand voters and I think that, to a certain extent, we are living proof that the people wish to see some changes in the political parties.

The Speaker's role is to protect the minorities in this house. We have the right to speak, and not only after the party whips have decided to let six Liberals, six Conservatives and six members of the New Democratic party have the floor. We have been elected to the house by the people. We represent not only a riding, a province, a party, but we have been elected members of parliament for Canada and represent the whole country. We are all equal when it comes to having the right to speak.

That is why I ask you, on behalf of the hon. member for Three Rivers and the others, to reconsider this attitude and not allow the party whips to decide who is going to speak.

[English]

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre): I appreciate the difficulty in which you are, Mr. Speaker, as the result of having to come to a decision on this point. Perhaps you are going to reserve judgment. I was very much interested in the remarks of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Medicine Hat, the great reformists of just a year ago in the committee