

Procedure and Organization

also accept that if that is accepted in the first case it also applies equally well to the second case, which is the application to 75c.

My feeling is that there does have to be some clarification of the two rules taken together. I fully appreciate and support the position taken by the Leader of the Opposition in that, before the order is adopted, there must be some clarification in respect of 75B, as well as 75c, to which an amendment has been moved. The problem would be to work out some appropriate method of dealing with the question.

Mr. Crouse: Then let us send the report back to the committee.

Mr. Reid: I think we will have to have some form of motion moved during this debate to send the matter back to committee, with specific instructions to clear up this ambiguity.

Mr. McGrath: Then do it now.

Mr. Baldwin: Would the hon. member permit a question? If I am prepared to alter my amendment to so provide, would the hon. member be prepared to second it?

Mr. Reid: I do not think I could accept the amendment moved by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) because of its effect to 75c. But if the hon. member moved a motion to send 75B back to the committee for amendment, I would certainly support it. I would go even further and say that I would be prepared to support an amendment to 75B that would recognize the position of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), as an officer of this house, so that in implementing 75B any majority would have to have the support not only of the government party but also that of the official opposition. I think that is a perfectly reasonable position to take.

I should like to deal with one argument that has been raised in respect of the proposed rules 75A, 75B and 75c with regard to elapsed time. How much time would it take to impose 75c during the course of the passage of a bill? We have had a number of estimates and I have made one of my own which is made up of a day to day schedule.

On day one you would have first reading of the bill. On day two you begin debate on second reading, with notice being given of 75c. On day three you would have the two-hour debate and the order approved. On day four you would have a one-day debate on second reading with referral to committee. On day five you would have the commencement

[Mr. Reid.]

of the committee proceedings, plus the motion giving notice of 75c in the house. On day six you would have the two-hour debate under 75c; the committee could sit while this was going on. On day seven you would have a full day's sitting in committee, as provided for under Standing Order 75c. On day eight you would have the report of the committee to the House of Commons. On day nine you would have the delay in proceeding imposed by standing order 75, which is the provision of 48 hours' notice. On day ten you would have commencement of the report stage and the moving of Standing Order 75c. On day 11 you would have the two-hour debate under 75c. On day 12 you would have one full sitting day on the report stage. On day 13 you would have a full sitting day for third reading of the bill. That amounts to 13 days of sittings, which is two and a half weeks of sitting time.

In addition, when dealing with the question of elapsed time we have also to consider that no matter how you slice it you still have two weekends intervening. This means the amount of elapsed time is increased from 13 days to a total of 17 days. I need hardly remind hon. gentlemen that it is on weekends that some of us make our political impact, particularly on the available electronic media such as television—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Don't be so modest.

Mr. Reid: —which greatly assist the dissemination of news and events for the edification of the voters. The major television public affairs programs are aired over the weekend.

I do not feel that the proposed 75c is the threat to democracy that it is made out to be. May I indicate what the mother of parliaments has done in regard to implementing closure. I should like to read into the record their Standing Order 31 which deals with closure of debate, and also the business committee formed under standing order 43. Standing order 31 reads:

After a question has been proposed a member rising in his place may claim to move, "That the question be now put," and unless it shall appear to the Chair that such motion is an abuse of the rules of the House, or an infringement of the rights of the minority, the question, "That the question be now put," shall be put forthwith, and decided without amendment or debate.

2. When a question "That the question be now put" has been decided in the affirmative, and the question consequent thereon has been decided, a member may claim that any further question be put which may be requisite to bring to a decision any question already proposed from the Chair, and