

*Procedure and Organization*

result of considerable debate can the function of the opposition in parliament be exercised. Only that way can the beneficial results—and I think we all admit they are beneficial—of a proper opposition in parliament be secured for the people of the country.

One could point to many examples of what the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) is pleased to call a filibuster. Generally people on the government front benches call them filibusters. In many cases far from being filibusters those proceedings ought to have been called debates, designed to alert the general public to the dangers of legislation being presented to the house and to secure a sufficient interest in the matter so that public opinion might be brought to bear, and in turn so that the government might be brought to realize that the legislation being proposed needed to be changed.

One could point to all sorts of examples in recent years of so-called filibusters, the two most outstanding being the debate on Mr. Howe's proposals to retain certain powers under the Defence Production Act, and the pipeline debate. There is no hon. member here who could not cite many other examples. They all show how necessary it is for opposition parties to be able to debate for a sufficiently long time measures brought forward by the government, in order to arouse public opinion. That such debate is necessary I think is self-evident, and any student or lover of the democratic process will readily admit that there is necessity for such debate.

The ostensible reasons the government has for introducing proposed rule 75c are to save the time of the house, to prevent obstruction in the house by the opposition, and so on. I ask hon. members on the government side who are putting forward this proposal, what obstruction are they talking about? What obstruction has prevailed in the past year that makes necessary a rule like 75c? If they answer that question reasonably and fairly perhaps the only measure they can point to in which there was any obstruction at all was the omnibus bill to amend the Criminal Code. In any event I think that proposed rules 75A and 75B would have been sufficient to deal with that situation, and there would not have been any need to invoke rule 75c.

In my view, Mr. Speaker, the proposal to introduce rule 75c demonstrates that the government does not like parliament, that it looks on parliament as a nuisance, and that it is determined to undermine it and reduce its power as much as possible. Except in countries ruled by dictators, or that have been in

the past ruled by dictators, one will generally find a conflict between the legislative and executive branches of government. The history of almost every country shows that the executive from time to time has tried to take unto itself greater and greater powers and get away from restraints imposed by the legislature.

In the United States system there is a division of powers which is designed to ensure that the executive is shackled by the legislative and judicial branches. In our system of representative cabinet government although it is theoretically possible for members of the house to control the power of the cabinet by threatening to vote its members out of office, in practice when one considers how party discipline has developed that is a practical impossibility.

Since it is almost impossible to make members of the government party vote against the government, we have lost within our legislatures the power to restrain governments. Unless the opposition retains the right to, shall we say, obstruct government if it feels the government is pursuing a course that is against the best interests of the country, public opinion may never become alerted to the danger, and action to correct the danger may not be taken. The legislation may go through parliament before the country is alerted to its danger.

Where is the evidence that this government looks on parliament as a nuisance, and that it seeks to undermine it, Mr. Speaker? One piece of evidence is the roster system for the attendance of ministers. The absence of ministers impairs the effectiveness of the question period, and by this method the government has shown its contempt of parliament. One of the traditional rights of members of the house has been the right to question in the house members of the executive with respect of government policy. Since at best only half our ministers are supposed to be here at any one time under the roster system, the rights of ordinary members have been impaired. But even more clearly does the government show its contempt for parliament when, day after day, only eight, nine, ten or eleven of the 28 ministers show up for the question period. Today, for example, there were eight ministers here for a time, and later nine. This can only be interpreted as thinking that parliament does not amount to anything, that the ministries do not have to account to parliament for their actions, thus generally circulating the idea throughout the