

Procedure and Organization

Again, had the issues involved in that legislation received wider public discussion, perhaps there would not have been quite as much resistance to those reforms as was the case.

The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Blair) and the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) used the British experience and the British rules as an analogy. There are a couple of procedures used by the United Kingdom parliament that I think should be copied here. The first is the use of what is known as the "honest broker"—"the usual channels". The President of the Privy Council made reference to this officer and stated that in the United Kingdom parliament he did not pay attention to other parties in the house. We make our own jurisprudence in this house and no one suggests, that in the Canadian context, the senior public servant who acts as "honest broker" between the parties in parliament should not have due regard for the wishes of all parties represented in this parliament.

• (8:10 p.m.)

The second procedure, one which I think is fundamentally different from ours, is the use of the panel of committee chairmen. There is much less partisanship in the British parliamentary committee system than has unfortunately been evident in several cases in this parliament. The Order Paper for today displays evidence of an extraordinary manoeuvre that was used by the government in order to try to circumvent the wishes of the transport committee. An attempt was made by the minister, the last speaker, to frustrate the debate upon which we are now engaged. It is clear why hon. members are taking some time. We have an obligation to the country to spend some time examining this nefarious proposal embodied in proposed rule 75c. In the United Kingdom they have a panel made up of committee chairmen who are representatives of all parties in that house. Those chairmen are potential speakers. In many cases when an important government measure is being processed in parliament, the committee chairman may come from a party in opposition—a civilized way of doing things that we might emulate in this country. I have been informed that often when the United Kingdom government has a particularly ticklish bill that it wishes to put through the house, it is glad indeed to employ a committee chairman from some opposition party. The neutrality of the United Kingdom government in these instances is very obvious.

The minister spoke sadly but unconvincingly about the number of items to be processed on the order paper. If he will examine the order paper closely, and I might add that I did not spend my entire supper hour reviewing the order paper, I think he will find that from pages 8 to 17 inclusive are listed more than 100 proposals that this house has approved. There are 18 items on the order paper, but many of them are routine and are not ones about which we need be overly concerned. The minister spoke about the Expropriation Act amendments. He ought to know that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) is not disposed to move those amendments forward at this time. The matter has been referred quite properly to the lawyers of this country for comment, and undoubtedly this fall the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs will consider the implications of the new bill. Even if this house were to give its unanimous consent, the Minister of Justice could not move this bill forward at this time; and the President of the Privy Council knows that to be so. There are one or two items to do with the Senate that the government does not wish to put before parliament at the moment; neither does it wish to proceed with item 29, the bill to amend the Supreme Court Act. Educational television has been under consideration for some time and no one in this house wishes in the least to hold up this measure. The minister knows that policy in this important area is in process of evolution and that the government is not ready to proceed with the bill until certain policy considerations have been thrashed out. I think the minister is being unjust to the most co-operative parliament, of which I have had the privilege of being a member when he says that we have hamstrung the government. If anything, we have been far too easy with the government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bell: Especially when one considers how the government acts.

Mr. Fairweather: If we ignore the one example alluded to earlier in the debate, government spokesmen have advanced a specious argument in support of reasons for introducing a ruthless new rule such as the one proposed by the President of the Privy Council and the Liberal majority on the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization.

I have had the privilege since coming to parliament of serving on several committees on procedure; and always, and I say this with