

*Amendment to Standing Orders*

the day in 1913 to introduce a motion to amend the rules of the House. This was done without references to any procedures committee.

This sort of action, Mr. Speaker, lives long in the mind of Parliament. I know that when I first came to this House, quite recently really, the memories and echoes of that debate of 1913 were still in the minds of many of the more experienced members of this chamber, even though none of them had been in the House when it took place. The dean of the House then was the Honourable Chubby Power who, I believe, was first elected to Parliament in 1917.

But, Mr. Speaker, the advent of that particular rule, not only because of what it was but because of the method employed to bring it into the House, did grievous damage to this institution. In the minds of many people in Canada it was only overshadowed and faded into the background as a result of the crisis period which developed during the pipeline debate. The atmosphere of ugliness of the pipeline debate had all but disappeared from the minds and memories of members of this House when last July the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) abandoned the standing practice and procedure of this House concerning amendment of the rules, for, apparently, a practice which is still to be maintained. Now, the Standing Committee on Procedure is to be a committee dominated by the government, as is any ordinary committee of the House instead of following the practice where His Honour the Speaker traditionally was chairman of that committee and the Clerk of the House of Commons was the clerk.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I do not expect the House to give easy passage to my proposal today. Indeed one or two of my colleagues have indicated that they have questions on its advisability. But I very deliberately put it on the Order Paper because I had hoped that when it came up for discussion in the House there could be some quiet reflection upon just what happened last July. Perhaps then the mood of the House would be to think how far we had departed from the tradition and practice of Parliament in the debate which took place then, which included the use of closure to enforce a new form of closure rule. To some of us, this was about the ultimate, except that as the time, and today, more important than the particular subject matter of any of those rules was the state of mind which would allow the crushing mass of an

[Mr. Barnett.]

official government majority to force rule changes through this House of Commons. As far as my understanding goes, Mr. Speaker, this happened only once before, and that was during the adoption of the original closure rule to which I have already referred.

May I point out that because of the growing recognition of the need to streamline parliamentary business, recent rule changes had already achieved a great deal. In the discussion last July there was no argument, nor was there in procedural committees for a period of years prior to that, about the need for change. Indeed, in all the procedural committee meetings in the years following the aftermath of the pipeline debate, no one at all seriously suggested the abolition of the closure rule about which there was such a serious battle at the time of its introduction, a battle that was bitter not only because of the proposed change in the rules but also because of the manner in which it was enacted. The government of the day, led by the right hon. Mr. Borden, decided, in order to achieve its purposes, to force this change of the rules through the House unilaterally. That is why for so many years the mere mention of the closure rule was a nasty thing in the minds of so many parliamentarians, and in the minds of so many people across the country. Indeed, it was also the reason the pipeline debate had the impact on the Canadian people which was indicated in the results of the general election next following.

• (5:20 p.m.)

I should like to refer just briefly to one or two of the things that were said in that debate on the matter of the closure rule in 1913 to indicate something of the atmosphere and the temper under which that motion was introduced. I note that the Leader of the Opposition, who was Sir Wilfrid Laurier, was not granted the normal courtesy of the House. He was not allowed to follow the Prime Minister when he introduced the motion but, by a motion that somebody else be heard, the government's majority denied the leader of the Opposition the traditional right to reply to a statement coming from the leader of the government. That was symptomatic of the atmosphere which had been generated in the House by the government. Mr. Borden moved his resolution in April, 1913. I am about to quote from page 8426 of *Hansard* for April 23, 1913. Mr. Macdonald, the member for Pictou, was speaking, and he said in part:

Talk about parliamentary rules and parliamentary amenities? They have become a thing of the past