

Let me get back to my basic contention that the use of Standing Order 75C is no way to run the business of Parliament. I know that every time this two hour debate takes place under rule 75C, there are those on the government side who will say the rule is in the book, it is there to be used, and it is perfectly proper and legal to do so. Like a few other members in the House, I was here when Standing Order 75C was put into our rule book. I have here two volumes of *Hansard*, which I think should be recommended reading to those who are not aware of how we came to have Rule 75C. Shortly after the election of 1968 when the present Prime Minister came back to the first full term of his government, a very large package of rule changes was proposed by the president of the Privy Council of that day, the Hon. Donald Macdonald. It was proposed early in the session which began in 1968, and we dealt with it off and on right up until Christmas. There were some good things in that package. There were changes in respect of the handling of bills, which included the report stage, there were changes with regard to the supply practice, and so on. But included in that package was a rule called 16A which practically put in the hands of the government House leader the right to close off debate at any time. The House found it most offensive, and most of the debating and fighting over that package centred around Rule 16A. Finally, because Christmas was approaching and members wanted to get home as did the government, the government agreed to drop Rule 16A from the package if we would put the rest of the rules through. The House agreed to that suggestion, and we got rid of Rule 16A, or at least we thought we did.

At the same time, the government proposed a motion that later on there be a further study of the question of the use of time. So, come June of 1969, we had back before us a substitute of the old Rule 16A, which was Rule 75A, 75B and 75C. We found it no better than the old Rule 16A and we continued our opposition to it. If one were to read Volume X of *Hansard* of the session of 1968-69, one would find that it was debated at length in the House, it was dealt with in the standing committee for a long time, and finally it came back to the House for further debate. How did it end? It ended because the government decided it wanted to have that rule, on the books despite the opposition of all opposition parties, and it invoked the old 1913 closure rule to put another closure rule in the rule book.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Knowles: The vote of the opposition parties against it was unanimous. It was only because of the government's majority that it was put through. While I have to admit that, legally, that puts the rule in the rule book, it is really only a rule of the Liberal majority; it is not the rule adopted in the way which most rules of parliament are adopted; that is by Parliament, by consensus. I think it is a travesty of parliamentary practice to keep on using that rule, and it makes it even worse when members stand up, as they probably will today, and say that they have the right to use the rule because it is

there. They put it there under conditions that are a disgrace to Parliament itself, and I believe this should not be done.

I have demonstrated several times in debating these motions under Rule 75C that I am not opposed to efforts being made to make good use of our time, and I think we have to pursue that effort. The difficulty with Rule 75C is that every time it is used, the government thinks it does not have to do anything more about the use of time. I proposed, the last time we debated this, that we should have the government's business for the session given to us at the start, and that we should have a set of rules under which we could send a few unimportant bills to committee without debate, have a fixed time limit of a day or two of debate on the bulk of the bills, and have debate without restriction on the crucial bills, the controversial ones picked out by the opposition. I still think that is a good idea.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that even in my lifetime in this Parliament there have been many changes in the use of time. Some members would be surprised if I told them that when I first came here there was no limit on the time to be taken up by the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, there was no limit on the debate on the budget, there was no limit on supply, there was not even a fixed limit on the number of supply motions. In fact, all we had was a 40-minute limitation on speeches and the rule that the House rise at eleven o'clock at night. Let me say that in those days we sat until eleven p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. It is pretty soft around here these days.

The point I am making, Mr. Speaker, is that the business with which we have to deal has grown and multiplied tremendously, so we have put in some time rules. We have cut the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne down to eight days, we have cut the budget debate down to six days, and we have cut the supply days down to 25. We have made all sorts of arrangements which arise from the fact that there are only so many days in the year and that the business has to be dealt with, business which, as I said, has increased tremendously. I believe what we have to deal with, what we have to come to, is a planning of the whole session. That is totally different from going along, as we do, allowing the government, on an ad hoc basis and whenever it feels frustrated, whenever it feels it cannot tolerate any more debate, to come in and use an unfair rule to cut off debate on the part of the opposition.

As I said already, I fully agree with the position taken by the hon. member for St. John's West that this is a bill of great magnitude and of great concern.

While you have been in the Chair, Mr. Speaker, you yourself have found it difficult to apply the rule of relevance to the debate on this bill because it touches the whole gambit of economic affairs in this country, including taxation, spending, and government policy in every area. In other words, it is probably the most important subject that has been before Parliament in this session. Some might say that the constitution is more important, but we have that with us day and night, we have lived with it for 114 years. However, in terms of the problems facing the country in the economic area, an