

*Procedure and Organization*

house based on an allocation of time in turn based on agreement among the parties in the house. If the opposition does not co-operate, then whether 75c is in effect or not the government cannot hope to get through as much legislation in the next session as it did in this session.

It is a very simple thing for the opposition parties to use far more time than was taken this session on many measures that were before the house. I do not need to remind the house of how many opposition days, in the form of budget and other debates, the opposition parties gave up on the assumption that the government house leader (Mr. Macdonald) was acting in good faith and really intended to adjourn on June 26 or 27. We thought we were entitled to rely on his good faith, but I do not think any member of the house will ever do so again, at least on this side of the house.

I emphasize that it is only through co-operation of the parties in the house and allocation of time on that basis that the government can hope to get through a large legislative program. Proposed rule 75c would not enable the government to get through a large legislative program. It is nonsense for the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) or the chairman of the appropriate committee to suggest that it would. I would even go so far as to say it is almost dishonest for any experienced parliamentarian to suggest that 75c would help the government to get through a heavier legislative program than is the case under the existing rules.

It is true that 75c would enable the government to bull through a particular measure, a particular project or a particular bill, but it would not enable the government to get through a substantial program. It would enable it to bull through a particular measure despite the need there might be for debate, despite the need there might be for the country to have adequate time to familiarize itself with the contents of a bill.

Some suggestion has been made, though outside the house, that with modern means of communication there does not need to be as much time as previously for the country to become familiar with the contents of a bill before the house and to consider the measure. Sir, through you may I remind the house that when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) introduced his taxation measure relating to estates, despite the fact that a number of us immediately directed attention on two occasions in the house to the significance of that measure it was really a matter of months,

[Mr. Stanfield.]

certainly of weeks, before the country at large became aware of its significance, before the backbenchers on the government side became aware of its significance. It was only then that the country, the opposition and backbenchers on the government side persuaded the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) to modify very substantially the proposal he was making to the house and therefore to the country. I mention this as an indication of the danger involved in 75c.

Proposed rule 75c will not do what the government suggests it would, even if this were desirable. It will not enable the government to bull through a large legislative program. It will simply enable the government to cut off debate on a particular measure when cutting off that debate would perhaps be the last thing that should happen.

The government now has the means for proposing closure to stop a protracted debate which it considers to have gone on for too long on a particular stage of a measure. It already has the ability and the right to impose closure. What the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) is seeking is not power for the government to enact a bigger program but power to restrict the right of the opposition to examine particular projects. Rule 75c will do nothing to make the government more efficient. It will do a great deal to limit criticism when the government wishes to limit criticism and therefore limit freedom.

Rule 75c would not make parliament more efficient in handling the legislative program, but there is no doubt it would make closure more efficient with regard to particular measures. Closure as it now exists is noisy and messy. It is not the sort of thing that is done in Mount Royal today, at least not out in the open. Closure exists to choke off the right of the representatives of the people to express their opinions, and it has been accepted because it is recognized that on certain rare occasions there ought to be this control of parliament. But it has been accepted with a caveat, with the knowledge that a government which adopts such a procedure must be prepared to pay the price for using it. It has always been the case so far that if a government wants to choke off parliament it runs the risk of getting some blood on its hands.

This is what the government wants to change. It wants to make its control of parliament less messy and more automatic. It wants to throttle parliament in a more genteel way. Sir, if members of this government were directors of Murder Incorporated they would