

*Procedure and Organization*

at the appropriate moment I shall raise a point of order against the motion, under Standing Order 51.

• (5:40 p.m.)

[Translation]

**Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière):** Mr. Speaker, this is one of the first times that we see the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in his seat to participate in a debate, and he takes advantage of it to impose the closure rule. Having concluded his—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Fortin:** Mr. Speaker, I would like your co-operation to call the clowns opposite to order.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Fortin:** I notice with dismay, Mr. Speaker, that the first presence of the Prime Minister to participate in a debate of utmost importance, in relation to the very existence and good operation of parliament—the first institution of this country—is only to impose closure under another closure rule. In my opinion this is shameful. The members opposite who have been smiling and laughing since the unfortunate announcement of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) should have sat instead of the representatives of the several parties of the opposition at the meetings held since Thursday last, with a view to arriving at a compromise.

First, the government claims that the opposition is not really seeking a compromise. I shall point out that the proposal to find a compromise as a token of our good will, was put forward by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Center (Mr. Knowles), who is a member of the opposition and not a government member.

This is the proof, Mr. Speaker, that all the members of the opposition agreed, not to fight stupidly against the government but remain as co-operative as they have been since the beginning of this session, in order to conclude this debate as a result of a parliamentary agreement.

Now the government, following friendly consultations and the almost superhuman attempt by the representatives of the various parties of the opposition which extended their co-operation, and submitted some proposals has shown the extent of its intelligence by sweetly stating that closure had to be put through, but I repeat that it is dictatorial and absolutely unacceptable.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

The strangest thing I find, Mr. Speaker, is that among the government members there are veterans of the two World Wars who have fought dictatorship they are now party to.

Mr. Speaker, we, of the Ralliement créditiste, say “yes” to co-operation, “yes” to consultation, “yes” to agreement “yes” to understanding. We are prepared to listen to government proposals and to co-operate at any time. However, we are not prepared to sell ourselves or to be muzzled.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to point out that the famous Standing Order 75c was first imposed upon the Committee on Procedure and Organization. From there, it was imposed upon the special committee, which has just met. Negotiations have broken off because the government, at this meeting, has once again forcibly imposed upon us this Standing Order 75c. A third time, the government imposes it on the house. In my view, the government had decided a long time ago that it would use its dictatorial power, its majority, to impose its view upon parliament.

Mr. Speaker, with respect, may I point out that Parliament is not at the service of one cabinet or of one man, but of all the people of Canada. All hon. members are equal here; all have the right to speak and to propose amendments for the purpose of improving our laws.

What is most odious, in my view, with regard to clause 75c is that, normally, members of Parliament are elected to examine legislative proposals, to read them, study them and to attempt to improve them.

But, under rule 75c, which the government has imposed, a time limit is fixed without any regard as to whether the opposition members have any amendments to submit or any points to bring forward. In consequence, Mr. Speaker, the hon. members do not have the freedom nor the instruments needed to improve legislation and do their job to the best of their ability because the government is able to control the primary factor, the cornerstone of Parliament, that is the time factor.

The government, Mr. Speaker, has become the master of its own members, by muzzling and gagging them. The government now wants to become master of the third parties in the opposition, and in that it shall not succeed.

It has been recognized for a long time, Mr. Speaker, by all observers that government