

Procedure and Organization

in the house. I believe we have moved very rapidly this session in respect of legislation brought before us. I said earlier that 75c is clearly a naked power-grab. I am fearful that the government majority next session may be planning to ram down the throats of the opposition legislation that may be complex and far-reaching in its implications, and that will demand a great deal of sober debate and reflection.

It has been asserted more than once to me by Liberal members that they were elected to govern and, by God, that is exactly what they intend to do. No one quarrels with that statement, provided it is not presented with unmitigated arrogance. What makes the government believe they can proceed with papal infallibility? Does all intelligence reside on the other side of the chamber?

Mr. Benjamin: They do not say anything, so you cannot tell.

Mr. Rose: I ask hon. members to consider for a moment what might happen if the normal checks and balances were one by one removed from our democracy. We would be confronted with the situation whereby an all-powerful government, headed by an all-powerful prime minister, would face a completely de-fanged paper tiger of an opposition. What chance would there be of sober examination of legislation the government wished to rush through the house? How would people then be able to protect themselves and protest the passage of hasty, ill-conceived legislation, or that prompted by the lobby of a special interest group which happened to have the ear of the government?

In his book "The Reform of Parliament" Mr. Bernard Crick wrote a great deal about parliamentary matters. In this excellent book he had this to say about the topic I have been discussing:

The only meanings of parliamentary control worth considering, and worth the house spending much of its time on, are those which do not threaten the parliamentary defeat of a government, but which help to keep it responsive to the underlying currents and the more important drifts of public opinion. All others are purely antiquarian shufflings. It is wholly legitimate for any modern government to do what it needs to guard against parliamentary defeat; but it is not legitimate for it to hinder parliament, particularly the opposition, from reaching the public ears as effectively as it can. Governments must govern in the expectation that they can serve out their statutory period of office, that they can plan—if they choose—at least that far ahead, but that everything they do may be exposed to the light of day and that everything they say may be challenged in circumstances designed to make criticism as authoritative, informed and as public as possible.

[Mr. Rose.]

Thus the phrase "parliamentary control", and talk about the "decline of parliamentary control", should not mislead anyone into asking for a situation in which governments can have their legislation changed or defeated, or their life terminated... Control means influence, not direct power; advice, not command; criticism, not obstruction; scrutiny, not initiation; and publicity, not secrecy. Here is a very realistic sense of parliamentary control which does affect any government. The government will make decisions, whether by existing powers or by bringing in new legislation, in the knowledge that these decisions, sooner or later, will find their way to debate on the floor of one of the houses of parliament. The type of scrutiny they will get will obviously affect, in purely political terms, the type of actions undertaken. And the civil service will administer with the knowledge that it too may be called upon to justify perhaps even the most minute actions.

I plead with the government: Don't do it, fellows. Don't try and push this thing through. If you want closure, say so. You have a rule for closure. Use it. At least people will respect you for having the courage to use the rule that is in the book. If there is a real issue and you want to close off debate, use the closure rule. But don't try and sneak in closure by peddling 75c as something you may not use. You know that when the chips are down you will use it.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I plead with the government to reconsider this matter; and I wish them a happy vacation!

[Translation]

Mr. Laprise: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but I would like to advise hon. members of the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

Mr. Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the house that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: The hon. member for Frontenac (Mr. Dumont)—Canadian Broadcasting Corporation—Vancouver—Closing of French radio station; the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding)—Water Resources—Hamilton, Ontario—Pollution by Steel Company of Canada, Limited; the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave)—Senior Officials—Department of Finance.