

Procedure and Organization

Disraeli said:

No government can be long secure without a formidable opposition.

I think it was the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather) who quoted Edmund Burke. Edmund Burke said:

He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper.

I might just end on this note. We have gone along with reform on the rules of parliament, and we have gone a long way. When that reform did away with committee of the whole procedure for bills and did away with committee of supply in relation to estimates, I said we should at least retain control of 15 per cent or 20 per cent of the estimates in the house, because the only control the opposition has over this kind of arrogance and dictatorship is the control of the purse strings of parliament. The government has gone a long way on the road towards dictatorship. The Liberal party said their government was going to be made up of young men with a new image and new vision. We were going to plan our work so that we would be able to leave here on June 27 and resume the session in October. Surely, the government did not think it could try to ram this rule change through parliament without the opposition being aware of its tactics? What the government is doing today is taking away the effective tools of all members of parliament, and particularly the effective tools of an opposition whose functions are as I have outlined them this evening.

● (9:50 p.m.)

I had hoped that the Prime Minister would have been in the chamber tonight. In his absence I would ask the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) to have another look at this matter in the hope that the government would withdraw this motion, just as it did at Christmas, and let parliament remain a living institution where Canadians can speak through their elected representatives.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Dumont (Frontenac): I would like to express my opinion on rules 75A, 75B and 75c. We have every reason to say that every day, matters were presented in this house that led the minority to believe that it was its duty to object strongly.

If this government, blinded by its majority, would care to open its eyes, there would be

[Mr. Woolliams.]

no ground for discussions such as the one we are having today. What proves me right, Mr. Speaker, is that Bill C-202, even though it is far from perfect, was passed thanks to our support.

After all, what we want as Canadian members of parliament is to express the voice of the people who cannot be heard at a moment when we are threatened with a dictatorial regime. Once again, I say there are circumstances when the opposition, called the minority, must make its views known vigorously because public opinion must know the dictatorial rule which is imposed upon the house.

I am not setting forth a new doctrine, Mr. Speaker. It goes back to the time of Charles I. History books are full of such references. The house leader had, at that time, introduced what was called the great remonstrance which was debated during a whole night. On another occasion, in 1771, the majority of the house did not want to allow the debates of the house to be published. Edmund Burke fought against this and succeeded in wrecking the majority's plan. He himself declared: posterity will bless the penetrating insight we showed on that day.

Since the Prime Minister is now travelling across Canada stating that we must have one Canada, one nation, and since, together, we have celebrated the 102nd anniversary of Canada last week, allow me, Mr. Speaker and hon. colleagues, to point out how in 1867, when Parliament was organized, following Confederation, rules were established for this house.

A special committee was then appointed to draft such rules. The committee's report was tabled in the house for further study as is stated in *Hansard* of December 27, 1867.

Dictatorial measures were also applied in 1885, 1896, 1908 and 1911, in order to deprive the opposition of all freedom of action. All governments who took such a step regretted it bitterly.

That is the reason why, today, I hold out to the Liberal members who condemn the dictatorial manner in which they are led, the olive-branch to replace the golden chains offered them by the Prime Minister.

I say to my good friends the Liberal members: If you should accept such measures, if you should approve rules 75A, 75B and 75c, you will regret it bitterly, as did the Borden