

*Procedure and Organization*

the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings of this a moment ago, and I am in full accord with the opinion he expressed at that time. Certainly I intend to invite hon. members as often as necessary to observe the rules. Since we are debating the rules it is elementary that hon. members observe this fundamental rule in particular.

• (4:30 p.m.)

**Mr. Crouse:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your advice. I know you will understand our confusion and difficulty. It is hard to know where to cut off debate—how to apply your comments strictly, while at the same time ignoring the tremendous problems which Canadians are facing in the absence of government action to deal with them. I might mention the shipbuilding industry, the fishing industry, the failure to deal with the Woods Report concerning veterans—the list goes on interminably but I will abide by your ruling and avoid getting into a lengthy discussion about these matters.

To suggest that the government needs rule 75c in order to respond quickly by way of legislation to some of the problems to which I have referred is nothing but hypocrisy in high places. The government is aware of these problems but the only action it has taken to deal with them is to set up task forces or royal commissions, or to take them under review. We know the previous Liberal administration left a mess to be cleaned up; the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said it would take some time for him to get his house in order. But he cannot lay the blame, or even attempt to lay the blame, on the opposition for the government's failure to deal with problems which are causing widespread concern and dismay.

When the Prime Minister was minister of justice he was asked when he would decide whether a defeat was not a defeat—before or after a vote. He replied: Before or after the vote; we are the masters of this house. I submit that by this answer the Prime Minister showed us his true colours; he displayed his arrogance and his contempt for parliament. He is now seeking, through the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald), to ride roughshod over the rights of private members—not only those who sit with the opposition, but also those who support the government. I ask hon. members who belong to the government party: what opportunity do you believe you will have to take part in debate if, through some miscarriage of justice, rule 75c should become a reality?

[Mr. Speaker.]

When the people in my constituency went to the polls they gave me majority support intending that I should come to Ottawa to speak out on their behalf whenever necessary. This statement applies to every constituency in Canada and to every member of this house. The government of the day will only remain the government of the day as long as it obtains the support of a majority in the house. In my view this places a responsibility on the cabinet for putting their heads together, analysing Canada's needs and coming forward with suitable legislation to satisfy them. If the legislation is well thought out, if it is constructive and beneficial to Canada, no responsible opposition will unduly delay its passage, as has been evidenced to date during the present session. Should the government reach a point at which it is faced with intentional obstruction and wilful delay in the passage of legislation, it has the right to use Standing Order 33, with its power of closure. Then, at the next election, the public can decide whether or not its action was justified.

It is most unfortunate that the cabinet and Prime Minister should have decided to force rule 75c through the house. This decision has already done violence to parliament by lowering the morale of its members and lessening the mutual respect and tolerance which has been built up among representatives of all parties. When passions are aroused and when angry words are exchanged across the floor of the house, how can a rational decision be reached, particularly as it was the stupidity of the government which provoked the row in the first place?

As a Member of Parliament, the only power I have is the right to be heard in this chamber. Any government which seeks to rob me of that power is treading on dangerous ground. The very essence of democracy is the right to debate—the right to speak out and be heard. I am not prepared to abrogate this right to the present government, because those who sit on the front benches opposite have not shown by their actions that they are humble enough to govern Canada; they have not shown that they have enough respect for our parliamentary traditions; they are not kind enough in their views with regard to the major problems facing Canadians, and they are not just in their program of priorities for dealing with these problems.

For all these reasons I ask the President of the Privy Council to seriously consider withdrawing rule 75c so that members may direct their thoughts and energies not toward a debate on the rules but rather toward solving