

Procedure and Organization

and we make that appeal now. The other right of appeal is to the electorate, and we are prepared at any time to make that appeal and to ask the Canadian people what they think of this dictatorial action of the government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief, and at the risk of being unfashionable in this debate I will address myself to the point of order raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). He said in his argument that the issue before us now is how we make our rules, by collective action, by consent or by governmental majority. I think that was the central point of his argument. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre is an experienced member of the house. He has been here a long time, since 1942, I believe.

An hon. Member: Too long.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): No, not necessarily too long. Of course he has had a lot of experience with the rules in the past. He knows, and Mr. Speaker you even had the opportunity to point out to the house last December, that there has been in the past more than one way of amending the rules of the house. As he suggested, there has been the decision by a committee of which Mr. Speaker was chairman. Equally, there have been decisions in the past by committees in which Mr. Speaker did not participate, and on motions by the Minister of the Crown.

The hon. member appeared to make something of the fact that in recent years we have been studying and changing the rules of the house using a committee of which Mr. Speaker is not a member. It seems to me that one should consider that if this is a bad principle now, it must have been a bad principle back in 1967 in the last session of the last parliament when, with the support of the hon. member, a special committee was set up of which Mr. Speaker was not chairman.

It must have been wrong in 1968 when the hon. member supported the setting up of the special committee in the earlier part of this session, and indeed it must have been wrong when the hon. member, as well as all members of the house, gave consent to Standing Order 65 under which the present Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization was set up.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that it was not wrong on those occasions, and it is not wrong now. Parliament decided last December 20 that we should change our rules by this system.

There is one other point, Mr. Speaker. As I said, the hon. member is very experienced. He will recall that back in 1965 he was interested in and followed the deliberations of the house when it considered changes in the procedure at that time. The changes were to introduce provisional Standing Order 15A, the allocation of time rule. Was it introduced in a report by a committee of which Mr. Speaker, was chairman? No, it was introduced by the prime minister of the day with the support of my colleague and predecessor as president of the privy council.

The fact of the matter was that there are precedents both ways in this regard. If you look back to the 1965 debate you will see, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre with his procedural agility appeared time and time again in the pages of *Hansard*, commenting on this and that, as to what was being done, and on the procedure being followed, but at no time then did he make any suggestion that because the government had introduced a motion to change the rules of the house to bring into effect the allocation of time procedure it was contrary to Standing Order 51.

I suggest that if it was not contrary to Standing Order 51 then, it is not contrary to Standing Order 51 now.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Before we call it six o'clock and the house rises until eight o'clock, may I say that I have some doubts as to whether the debate should be continued under the provisions of the point of order raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), that is under the guise of Standing Order 51. I must say in all candour that I have the impression that if this debate is continued it will be at the expense of the Chair, and I have very serious reservations as to whether this should be allowed. I hope that hon. members will allow the Chair as to make a ruling on the point of order soon as possible.

Some hon. Members: Make it now.

Mr. Speaker: A moment ago I noticed that two or three hon. members wanted to rise. They are rising allegedly, but I am sure honestly, for the purpose of discussing the