

*Procedure and Organization*

Some 704 years ago Simon de Montfort called the first parliament together. It was made up of barons, nobles and knights. It was not made up of the common people like the members of this house. It was made up of members of the upper class who were in revolt against the King's Henchmen. Simon de Montfort called that parliament together and down through the years we have developed a democratic parliamentary system. Kings and Queens have lost their heads during the process. People have been burned at the stake, and rulers have been destroyed.

One could get emotional about this whole thing, but we must remember we were handed this heritage; we did not develop it. Down through the years principles, rules and regulations have been fought for and put into our parliamentary system. I think of the Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights. They have been adopted to build up this system. One can go to the corridor of the sixth floor in this building and observe some mementos of history there, from the first Prime Minister to the present covering over 300 years of history.

When parliament was formed there was no time limit in respect of debate, and that was long before the 19th century. Closure was never heard of until the Irish nationalists, of the end of the last century by prolonging debate in the house, tried to destroy parliament. We did not hear of closure in this house until this century. The rules have been changed in this house from those which existed in earlier days. Let us look back over the records.

On more than one occasion the house sat all night. We did not have many rules or regulations in those days and a member could speak as long as he wished. It was not unusual for Tupper, Sifton and Blake to talk for several hours in this house, and all of them have a record of at least 9 hours. It was not until 1902 when Lord Balfour said something must be done to limit debate in the British House of Commons that closure was introduced. He suggested this to end the long-winded debates that were taking place in Parliament. It was not until then that people started to think about rules and regulations.

In 1906, under the leadership of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, this house began to refine and revise our rules and regulations. Down through the years they have been revised and time limits have been adopted. Now, an hon. member can speak for only 40 minutes, without permission to speak further, rather than the previous long hours. We have made great

[Mr. Rynard.]

advances. We must remember that we might reach the point where one further step in the direction of revision may destroy what we have built up over the years.

Let me suggest to the Prime Minister of Canada and other members of the government that we now may have reached a point of parliamentary destruction. If the government wants to adopt another system, it should take us into its confidence. If the government wants our support, it should tell us about this new system. We should know what they intend as a substitute when they destroy our system. If that is not what the government is doing it should tell us what it intends. This government has not been delayed during this session by the people on this side of the house. During this session the government has put through a great deal of legislation. To reiterate closure was never used until the Irish nationalists tried to destroy the British parliament. Closure was used in 1913 in this house for the first time. At that time it was brought in by Borden and the Conservative government. It is interesting to note that Arthur Meighen introduced the bill, and then condemned it. He condemned it because it gave the government too much power. On that occasion Borden did go to Sir Wilfrid Laurier to discuss this issue, and asked for a time limit. He offered to allow him to name the time limit but Laurier would not do this. At that time closure was applied in respect of the naval bill after prolonged debate.

At that time Sir Wilfrid Laurier made a famous statement which has been repeated in this House of Commons by other hon. members including the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). He said he would rather sit in the opposition without power than have to do what the Tories did at that time with power.

● (3:50 p.m.)

That is what a great Liberal, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, thought about closure. Closure was used in the Canadian Parliament on six bills, all in this century. It was used in 1917 on the Northern acquisition bill, and the Wartime Elections Act. These bills were brought in by the government of that day, and there was not prolonged discussion in respect of either of them. The next time closure was used was 1926, during the throne speech, debate by Mr. King. If my memory serves me aright, in 1932 Mr. Bennett used closure in connection with the Unemployment Act after only one clause out of four had been studied.