

*Procedure and Organization*

fail to understand how they could, deliberately, from sheer wantonness, adopt a measure that will prevent them from speaking on behalf of their electors. If they vote in favour of Standing Order 75c, they will repudiate their commitments towards those who have sent them here. It is unbelievable that party discipline should have them submit so blindly to the will of their boss.

Everyone agrees, Mr. Speaker, that parliamentary procedure must be improved. Still, it must be recognized that we have, in the last few years, made much progress in that direction. During the present session, the opposition has proved repeatedly its goodwill, its eagerness to co-operate with the government to speed up the business of the house. Others, before me, gave several examples of this.

Allow me to recall one again that we gave up days allotted to the opposition, that we also agreed to shorten our speeches that a greater number of members might be heard.

All this, Mr. Speaker, was achieved by mutual agreement between the members of the opposition and those of the Liberal party. I am firmly convinced that more work can be done, that there can be none agreement if we proceed as we have done until now, that is by mutual agreement.

Statistics reveal, Mr. Speaker, that at the time of the debates on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, on the budget and other important topics, the government members used their right to speak according to their numbers.

But it is rather surprising to see that today those same members in some particular cases, ask that their rights be recognized when they, in the same breath, would like to prevent the opposition members from enjoying the rights given them under the rules.

A few years back, Mr. Speaker, I sat on the committee set up to review parliamentary procedure. This committee included members such as Messrs G. W. Pickersgill, Lionel Chevrier and, if my memory serves me right, Paul Martin also. I can assure you, that none of these gentlemen would ever have accepted a bill such as the one now under consideration. In fact, when proposals were brought forward to improve parliamentary procedure, which would have prevented somewhat the opposition members from speaking as long as they wished, they cried out loud about dictatorship, if not worse. Their contribution on the committee on parliamentary procedure was strictly limited to the benefits it could bring to their party.

Perhaps is it also relevant to recall some of my first memories from the time when I first came here.

I was elected on June 10, 1957. As you know, we came in after a government known for its arrogance throughout the country if not the world over. The government we replaced had refused for many hours and even for many days to provide the opposition which information it was entitled to. And finally, to prevent the public from knowing some very unflattering things about several friends of the Liberal party, the government we replaced finally resorted to the gag. As a result of that attitude taken by the Saint-Laurent administration in 1956, that government was defeated during the elections held on June 10, 1957. The people took advantage of that opportunity to show in a concrete and tangible way its disapproval as well as its indignation. It refused to trust that government again with the result that the Conservative government, then headed by the right hon. John Diefenbaker, came into power.

I attended in this house the proceedings which begun after parliament met in October 1957—if I am not mistaken—and I can say that the humiliation of defeat has failed to convince the people opposite to put an end to their arrogance. From the way they acted, you could see that they intended to keep on claiming that power was theirs forever by right and to consider the administration of public affairs as their own province.

You should have seen the Chevrier, Martin, Pickersgill and even the right hon. Pearson systematically and continuously challenging the authority of the Speaker, rising on points of orders that actually were not founded, resorting to any means to embarrass the ministers and the government. All they wanted was to filibuster and they made no bones about it.

If the young members opposite really want to learn about the behaviour of those who came before them in this house, they have but to read the official report of the House of Commons from 1957 to 1963. They will realize that the authority of the house was never so much abused as when the Liberal party was in the opposition. It would have been very interesting to see their reactions at that time if the government had tried then to introduce a legislation such as rule 75c, which they are trying to impose upon us now. They would have shouted "tyranny", "dictatorship", if not deplored the death of freedom in this country.