

*Government Orders*

I received a big shock when I arrived at Parliament. I discovered, while I was sitting over there, that I had very little to do with legislation. Even as I talked to members who were on the other side of the House, at that time members of the government, they would say to me the same things that I felt.

• (1050)

They, too, felt that they were not part of the legislative process. That is why the McGrath task force was a turning point; that is why the question of committees is so important.

As we have gone through the three stages of reform we have had in the last 11 years—the Lefebvre committee, the McGrath task force, this set of rules that we have just put into the House of Commons, and the next one that is yet to come—

**Mr. Blaikie:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I wonder if the hon. member could explain how someone who has just moved to impose 10-minute speeches on everybody else, for all time, sees fit to go on for some 50 minutes now while others are waiting for an opportunity to speak. It seems a bit inconsistent.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** It must be Friday and the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona obviously heard all the nice things the hon. member for Peace River had to say about him a while ago. But with the rules that do prevail today, the hon. member is allowed unlimited time.

**Mr. Cooper:** Madam Speaker, I apologize to my friend for being so long but it is an opportunity I have not had in a long time—

**An hon. member:** Make it your swan song, Albert.

**Mr. Cooper:** —to express, with unlimited time, some of the thoughts that I have developed over my 11 years as a member of Parliament.

My friend says I am one of the people who has restricted other members to debate for 10 minutes. Now, he knows that is not true; he knows that, in fact, what we did in this rules change was to simply change the eight-hour rule to a five-hour rule, so that we have gone from 20 to 10. He will also know that in the McGrath task force it was the first time in my memory that we had suggested that speeches be shortened.

There is a consistency, and that is to give more members an opportunity to participate in the debate.

What I wanted to do this morning was take the few minutes that I have to lay out the type of session that we have just gone through. I wanted to talk about the rule changes and the way they impact on the institution. I wanted to tie that to the issues we are going to face in the next few weeks. The importance of the issues that we are going to face cannot be overestimated.

I think all of us know that we are going to have other issues, we are going to have other bills to debate in this Parliament. But the really important issue that we are all going to face is the question of national unity. I hope, and I want to express it even stronger than that, it is more than a hope, it is a strong desire, that Parliament be the focal point of that discussion.

I would like to be able to get up in the morning knowing that I am going to participate in a debate that is going to impact on the nature of this country, and more than to participate, to know that I am going to have an influence on it.

From what I can hear happening, that is what is going to happen. That is what is going to be the case, that we as members, are going to be able to participate in that debate in this House and we are going to have a chance to influence it.

I know, in terms of committees, that whatever this House addresses, whatever bill or motion we discuss, will probably at some point be referred to a committee of the House. Again, another opportunity for us as members to participate and to be part of the process.

I obviously have lots of papers in front of me and I could easily go on for another several minutes.

**Mr. Blaikie:** Oh, please do. Please do.

**Mr. Cooper:** I do not want to monopolize the time. That is not my intention. I did want to lay out these thoughts this morning, and to express to the House some of the concerns, attitudes and ideals that I would like to see us, as a House, express and live up to in the next little while.

I want to thank the hon. members for the opportunity to participate. Madam Speaker, I thank you for that chance. I want to say to all of the members that I hope they have a good rest over the recess. Most of us will be working in our ridings, but I hope we take the time to rest a little bit, because we are going to need to take the