

*Procedure and Organization*

more than reasonable delays indeed regarding the various stages of a bill. Everyone will benefit from it and that Standing Order will only be there as the Sword of Damocles, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said.

We had such an instance not so long ago, when a minority party comprising 14 members kept the house back for 20 days on a bill which had had also 14 extended hearings before the committee on justice and legal affairs. Without entering into the aims and reasons the members of the Ralliement chrétien had in mind when making use of their rights and privileges under the present Standing Orders, I should point out that they could have made that verbal marathon last still much longer.

However, when a deadlock occurs, when the right of speech and discussion becomes a closure in reverse, an exercise which is a deliberate violation of the majority's right to come to a decision, it is absolutely necessary in such cases—possible, though scarce—that our procedure contain a machinery for closure, and that, quite often, will greatly relieve even the opposition.

I am satisfied that is what the great majority of the Canadian people want: that we discuss, of course, but that we finally take a decision after a sufficient and reasonable time.

That is what is proposed, Mr. Speaker, in the recommendation of the committee that considered the matter at length and which took into account most of the objections raised last December, and which proposed a procedure considerably different from that known as rule 16A.

Last December, several members of the opposition agreed that the government should assume its responsibilities and its powers, and put an end to an endless debate, by closure or otherwise. The closure rule has seldom been applied here, in fact, 16 times only since 1913, and since the latest amendment of the Standing Orders, it is now very difficult to apply. The experience of 1956 proved to what extent that procedure can be complicated in its implementation. It is in fact proposed to apply it only when the difficulty arises, when the debate becomes violent and when the minds become excited. It is not, Mr. Speaker, a proper cure for the problems which could come up in the house.

I would refer you particularly to what the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin)

[Mr. Forest.]

said in December, as reported on page 3867 of *Hansard*, and I quote:

[English]

Surely some reasonable provision can be found. The case of an impasse between government and opposition occurs, and I think should be dealt with. It is true that in a case where all of the opposition parties obstinately refuse to agree to any reasonable time allocation on an individual item, the process of closure would be open to the government. But it may be, however, that in respect of individual items and after a reasonable time for the opposition to state its objections in debate, and subject to some reasonable limitation, the majority supporting the government should be able to resolve the impasse. I am not pleading that there should be no rule dealing with situations where there is an impasse, but this is a far cry from the present proposed rule.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the proposal of the hon. member for Greenwood was supported by many other members, and I refer to the debates which took place at that time.

This afternoon, I understood the Leader of the Opposition to say that in December he relied on the support of the press, and that he still had it. Yet, this afternoon, two editorials were read to us and I would like to quote to the house what the *Montreal Daily Star* particularly said on June 30 last. Here it is:

[English]

Opposition parties need not expect much public sympathy if they launch another filibuster to prevent the House of Commons from adopting the government's proposed new time-allocation rule. The experience of the past six months has provided sufficient proof of the need for machinery to ration the time spent on public business.

[Translation]

And it goes on to say:

[English]

Every day wasted by an opposition filibuster will provide more evidence of the need for rules to insure that parliament is a place not only to debate, but also to decide.

[Translation]

And on May 24 last, the *Financial Post* which is surely a very responsible newspaper stated in its editorial and I quote:

[English]

The government, whether this one or the next one, must have the power to carry out its prime responsibility which is to pass legislation. There is no justification in the name of democracy which allows a small group of MPs to frustrate that extremely important responsibility.

The opposition must now accept its true limitation and join with the government in approving some form of restraint on debate. The time for anything less has run out.