

*Procedure and Organization*

No doubt the government thought that since this was holiday time the people of Canada would not be interested in the issue. They thought they could rush this through. They were wrong. Public opinion has been aroused, as editorials in most of our newspapers tell us today. Most of us here could cite many examples of cases in which public reaction has been important, and in which legislation has been improved by opposition amendments and criticism. I could refer to the Canada pension plan which was brought in and pulled out like a yo-yo. Even now I sometimes wonder whether the government realizes that this was one of the factors which produced the present inflationary period—and the problems which inflation has created particularly for all those who have to live on fixed incomes and old age pensions.

I might refer to the transport legislation which was presented at one session, withdrawn, and presented again at a subsequent session so amended that its final version bore little resemblance to the original except that it did provide a very rewarding job for the then minister of transport. I might also cite the drug licensing bill which in its original form did not contain the safety measures suggested in the Harley report which contended that the people of Canada were entitled not only to cheap drugs but to safe drugs. Many of those present can remember what happened when this bill was first presented. Arguments were repeatedly advanced by the opposition that measures for greater safety should be incorporated in the bill, while the then minister of consumer and corporate affairs persisted in indicating that the legislation under the Food and Drugs Act was adequate. Suddenly, after the debate had been going on for several days, the minister himself came over to the opposition saying: Keep it going; we want it to die tonight. Which it did. The legislation was not brought forward again during that session and when it did reappear this session, it incorporated the measures for which we had asked.

Had 75c been in force at that time, and had the government been adamant about passing the drug licensing bill, I wonder whether the cheap drugs which could have been brought into Canada under the legislation would have been subject to an adequate examination so as to ensure the good health of our people.

More recently, Mr. Speaker, there was the case of the estate tax. I do not need to remind the house how unrealistic this legislation was,

[Mr. Howe.]

or how great was the feedback to every member of parliament when those implications were understood. As a result, the government was forced to change its stand. I contend that had 75c been in force at the time very little opportunity would have existed to make the press and the public aware of the extent to which this particular piece of legislation was unrealistic, taking into account the present inflationary pressures.

It has been said that the government opens the house with the Speech from the Throne indicating its legislative program for the year, but that the opposition closes it after examining, criticizing and proposing amendments to government legislation and expenditures. This is the situation which has existed almost from the time of the first parliament, but today we are debating a proposal which gives the government the right to shut off debate, to shut up parliament, almost at will. Is this what the people of Canada want? Is this what government backbenchers want? I have participated in seven parliaments and in each there was a group of members who felt the rules needed revision. I was not a member of the committees which took part in this procedure, though I was of the opinion, as they were, that the rules of this place could indeed be improved and amended. I should like to congratulate all those who, in the past, in a friendly and amicable fashion, have been able to reach conclusions in this field without situations developing such as that which has developed here today. Never before has a government waited until the last two days before a recess, whether at Christmas, at Easter or in the summer, before bringing in a report containing an item such as 75c which would destroy all the privileges and rights of this, the highest court in the land. On whom is the onus? May I refer to an editorial in the *Toronto Daily Star* of Tuesday, July 8—and goodness knows, the *Toronto Daily Star* has never been a strong supporter of the Conservative party. I quote:

• (10:20 p.m.)

Canadians who take their politics seriously will applaud members of Parliament who are prepared to debate proposed changes in House rules at length, regardless of their shortened holidays. Rules are the stuff that democracy is made of. They permit governments to govern; they protect opposition parties from being ignored. Where you put the accent all depends upon which side of the Speaker's chair your party sits.

Then it goes on to say:

What's wrong with the existing closure rule, which puts the onus wholly on the party elected