

Procedure and Organization

flibuster". There is no better way of describing the Prime Minister's attitude toward this institution of parliament than by that expression, "stupid flibuster".

A few minutes later, the Prime Minister imputed the motives to the opposition by describing the question period as hypocritical. This is further confirmation of the disdain and disregard in which the Prime Minister of this country holds this institution. I am concerned about this. This is why I said earlier that I regard this as a black day for Canada.

Great patriots of the governments of the past, not just common members of parliament like the majority of us, have said that the opposition in a democratic parliament is just as important and vital to the function of a parliamentary democracy as the government. There have been great prime ministers in the past such as Laurier, Mackenzie King, St. Laurent, Borden and Diefenbaker. These men have unanimously, over and again, proved in their lives of service to this house and the democracy of Canada that they regarded this institution as being something well nigh sacred.

• (9:30 p.m.)

The question which keeps coming back to my mind at this time is why the Prime Minister of this country, with his very short years of experience in this house, now seeks to bring about a basic reform of the rules and procedures of this house for which none of his predecessors ever thought of asking.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Thompson: There are many statements by the Prime Minister which I could use tonight. Some of them were made during the debate which centred around rule 16A, which we discussed earlier in this session. They reveal the basic, inner attitude of the Prime Minister.

I have a few questions I should like to ask members on the other side of the house. I ask them with sincerity. I do not expect an answer directly, but I would ask them to answer these few simple questions to themselves. Why is it at this time that every single member on the opposition side is united unequivocally against this closure rule which is now being forced on us by the use of closure? In my years in this house I have never before seen the opposition in complete unanimity. Can we all be wrong?

Mr. Forrestall: They say we are.

[Mr. Thompson.]

Mr. Thompson: They say they have a mandate to govern. They insist on the right to force through future legislation which might be controversial. I want to say to the government that this minority on this side of the house, unanimously united in our own free will, represents 55 per cent of the people of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Thompson: There is no political pressure on any member on this side of the house to vote or take a stand on this issue. This means we are united not only in action but in spirit. If some of those on the other side who are my personal friends are telling me the truth, and I believe they are, I do not think the same situation exists over there. There was the direction which went out to the caucus and to the backbenchers a few months ago, as one of the members on the other side of the house informed his own constituents, ordering them to support government policy in committees. Tonight a telegram has gone out under the name of the Prime Minister ordering every Liberal member of parliament to come back to vote as he directs.

I want to say to the members of the government that over on this side of the house there is a strong unanimity, a firm conviction, that the issue which we are discussing at the present time is the most vital issue we have ever faced in this House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Thompson: I should also like to ask hon. members on the other side why this rule is necessary at this time. The press and *Hansard* all tell us that the record of this parliament in this session has been a good one. Yes, we were hung up for a while on the Criminal Code amendments, and I shall have a few remarks to make about that. As a whole, however, this session has been a profitable one. Furthermore, and more so than in any session in my experience in this house, there has been a remarkable degree of good will and willingness to co-operate.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Thompson: I do not think that same willingness will be there in the future.

Mr. Woolliams: There is no way.

Mr. Thompson: This has been substantiated by the fact that an all party committee of the house, which took at least five years to draft