

Nelson River Power Development

I submit there is no over-all definition of parties in this house, and that we have accepted the fact that we are here as five groups. Your Honour has allotted areas in this house for the seating of each of the five groups that are here. I suggest that to attempt to alter this arrangement by objecting to spokesmen for the various parties having a chance to speak on motions is certainly defying the spirit of the last parliament, defying the spirit of parliament itself and defying the wishes of the Canadian people who, of their own free will, sent members of five parties to this House of Commons.

Mr. H. A. Olson (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, in support of the logical argument advanced by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, I should like to suggest to you that what you have done on a number of occasions, and what you did this afternoon in allowing one spokesman from each party to respond to the announcement made by the Prime Minister, is in keeping with the long traditions and practices of this house. Any one who now suggests that there is a new definition of a party in respect of this kind of recognition is in fact attempting to change this long established practice.

• (3:00 p.m.)

For example, during the years 1958 to 1962, when there were eight members in the C.C.F. party and later the New Democratic party, because the name changed during that period, the leader or a spokesman from among the eight was accorded the privilege of expressing the opinion of that party with respect to an announcement such as the Prime Minister made this afternoon.

I draw to your attention also, Mr. Speaker, that on many occasions prior to that time, particularly from 1935 up to 1957, there were numbers like eight, ten, twelve and even less in groups in this House of Commons, and they too were given an opportunity to state their party's policy in response to this kind of announcement. Therefore while, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has suggested, standing order 15(2a) is a new rule, there is precedent for this procedure by virtue of long practice.

Speaking specifically about this party, Mr. Speaker, while we have only five members with seats in this House of Commons, I would draw to your attention that there were well over 300,000, in fact I think nearly 400,000, Canadians who voted for our party. Surely this group of people have the right to have

their opinions expressed when this kind of announcement is made. I also suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that in so far as this party is concerned we have a direct relationship with two provincial governments, or one fifth of all the provincial governments in this country. I am sure Your Honour understands that there is a direct relationship between the policies we hold and the policies of these two provincial governments.

Surely when the Prime Minister makes an announcement that directly involves negotiations between the federal government and the provincial governments—and this was the essence of what the Prime Minister announced this afternoon—spokesmen who are in the same party as these two provincial governments ought to be able to give an expression of opinion in response to that announcement.

Therefore I do not think there is any validity whatever in the argument advanced by the hon. member for Cumberland, because if you were to seriously consider what he is suggesting this afternoon you would have to go against all the tradition and practice of this house for the past 30 years; you would have to violate what I suggest was accepted by this house when it approved standing order 15(2a). You would also to some extent violate the right of some 400,000 people to have their opinions expressed, and you would remove the possibility for the two provincial governments of the same party as this to express their views in response to this kind of announcement.

Mr. John M. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, as you no doubt are aware I am something of a hybrid in this house. I represent the Liberal-Labour Association of Kenora-Rainy River.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Reid: I want to put myself on record as in agreement with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Medicine Hat. I might say at this time that while I find myself in very congenial company in the Liberal party here, there may come a time with the shifting sands of politics when I would find it necessary to move away.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Churchill: Hurry up before it is too late.

Mr. Reid: I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I speak in the most hypothetical manner. But I do want to put myself on record in this