

Procedure and Organization

theory for relegating the opposition to a state of impotence. It is a deliberate attempt to abrogate the right to criticize. It is a deliberate attempt to abrogate the right to debate. It is a deliberate attempt to abrogate the right to dissent. All of these are unquestionably time honoured rights of the opposition, through which the opposition is able to make the government behave. The right to criticize, debate and dissent, Mr. Speaker and hon. gentlemen, are fundamental to the opposition's effectiveness. If this is so, and I really believe it is so, how could this government be so naive as to believe that we in the opposition would relinquish these rights without a murmur? Their memory is not very long. They seem to have forgotten December of 1968.

Rule 75c is only a modified version of 16A and it is totally unacceptable. In 1968, after much debate, 16A was withdrawn by the government. Public opinion indicated last December that 16A was not acceptable. Why should a modernized version, equally as vicious and equally as unacceptable, be acceptable now? Why should the government insist on 75c anyway? That is what I want to know. I have listened to some brilliant speeches from both sides of the house but nobody seems to be able to tell me why this is necessary. Have we on this side of the house been irresponsible? Have we not been co-operative? Have we not been reasonable? What is the necessity for 75c?

As a matter of fact, all the legislation the government desired to deal with has been dealt with and there is nothing on the Order Paper except this rules package. What is the necessity for 75c? It has been said that 75c is required in order to get on with legislation. What legislation are we talking about? Is the government talking about assistance to old age pensioners who are being strangled by the high cost of living? Is the government going to bring in legislation to cope with that problem? Is the government talking about the superannuates who are also being strangled by the high cost of living and inflation? Is this what the government is talking about? Is it talking about relief for the farmers in respect of the wheat problem? Is this the type of legislation it is talking about? Is the government talking about the plight of its first citizens? Is that the type of legislation about which this government is talking? Perhaps the government is going to bring in legislation which will determine a great oil policy for this continent. Perhaps, and this is my pet peeve, the government is going to create a

ministry of housing and urban development. What a great innovation that would be. Is that what the government is talking about when it talks about legislation?

Is the government talking about housing or is it talking about inflation and high costs? If these are the things about which the government is concerned, it does not need 75c because we will co-operate with regard to them.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Alexander: The government does not need that rule. I have outlined enough work to keep the government busy for two and a half years. It does not need 75c, and I would say that this government has proved miserably—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have to interrupt the hon. member as his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Carry on.

An hon. Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member's time has expired.

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, my first words must be to congratulate the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) for an outstanding contribution to this debate. In a very eloquent fashion, the hon. member tried to persuade some members opposite to change their ways, to change their minds and to repent before it is too late. It seems to me that throughout the address of the hon. member for Hamilton West there was the implication of that saying; hope springs eternal. It seems to me that if hon. members opposite show no sign of response to the very eloquent appeal just delivered by the hon. member, and if the only thing they are capable of is the type of interjection we heard during his speech, then really I am afraid both his and my faith in human nature may drop just a little bit.

This debate is an amazing spectacle. I entered this house in 1968 and I have been a member for a little over a year. It is some 10 months since this present session was convened. We are already witnessing a second major debate on the rules of this house. I noted with interest that the rules changes introduced before Christmas, which included rule 16A as well as quite a large number of other changes, were generally accepted throughout the house. That debate lasted nine