

Procedure and Organization

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), in the course of what I thought was a masterly speech, ended with a quotation from Louis St. Laurent. Since it is almost six o'clock I hope the minister will eat his dinner recalling a quotation from a speech by one of his colleagues, a minister who has been under fire lately. This comes from yesterday's *Toronto Star*; it is an editorial commenting on a speech made recently by the Minister of Communications (Mr. Kierans). The editorial speaks of the debt of gratitude the people owe him, and goes on to say:

Their real debt of gratitude will be for the thinking he is doing to try to determine what is needed to restore a human dimension to the world; to restore to man his status of man; to give him mastery over himself once more; in short to protect man from the very efficiency the communications minister is expected to provide.

In his second speech in recent weeks on the need for creating a new humanism, Mr. Kierans put the problem rather well when he said: "Mechanization, speed, technology, communications and computers; these are the key words which predominate today. These are the words which are driving men forward. But the one factor which is often forgotten in all this, I am afraid, is man himself—

Recent generations have failed to create a new humanism, he said, because in a hectic century they have failed to take time out to ponder their own position in the scheme of things. As a consequence, man has become a stranger to himself, to his own personality.

One way to overcome this, in Mr. Kierans' view, is for government to provide not only efficiency and leadership, but also sensitivity.

It is the absence of sensitivity on the part of the President of the Privy Council and his colleagues which has got us into the dilemma we face today. The editorial goes on:

That won't be easy, because "government naturally is a self-perpetuating institution which justifies its existence on grounds that are often quite unclear."

I do not know what went on in the cabinet when the Minister of Communications was taking part in the discussion which led the government to change its course and permit the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Blair) to introduce his motion. But I have the notion that the hon. gentleman did not think of the word "sensitivity". Nevertheless, because we are sensitive people, I suggest this is a good point at which to observe that it is six o'clock.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until 8 p.m.

[*English*]

At six o'clock the house took recess.

[*Mr. Fairweather.*]

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. Fairweather: Mr. Speaker, when I demonstrated my sensitivity at six o'clock by not asking for an extension of time I was reminding Your Honour and others of the warning given by the Minister of Communications (Mr. Kierans) about the danger of a government that lacks the essential element of sensitivity.

I should like to move on to a thesis that should be obvious to all. I refer to the property of the rules of parliament. Generally speaking, if the rules of this parliament have broad acceptance in this chamber they are bound to work efficiently. If, on the other hand, they are rammed down our throats by an insensitive government, they are likely to frustrate the very purpose the government has in mind in introducing them. Other hon. members have said that the rules are not the property of parties; that in fact parties, in our parliamentary system, have no place in parliament.

I should like to make one or two suggestions that I think might result in a much better examination of government bills. My first suggestion, to which I think the government is agreeable, is in connection with the laxity displayed by governments up to this time in getting their bills to the first reading stage. I hope that early publication of the new stream of legislation we are about to be faced with will be the rule, and that the exception will be the introduction of a bill in the latter stages of a session. This would bring about much better public understanding of the issues involved.

If I recall, it was a committee of this parliament that prepared the public for such fundamental changes as were embodied in the Divorce Act, and this made it possible for parliament to consider those changes quickly and effectively without requiring allocation of time or any unilateral decision by the ministry.

We have also had two examples of this laxity during this session. Although the piece of legislation that the house completed yesterday, the official languages bill, was clearly acceptable in principle to the majority of the citizens of this country, owing to the lack of explanation of the provisions contained in the bill I think there is real danger of its being misunderstood. The second example was the Criminal Code amendments which went to the basic consciences of a good many people.