

*Standing Orders*

attention of the public it was okay to use the rules, but now that he is in Government and we in the Opposition are attempting to bring questions to the attention of the public through the rules, that is not allowed.

What bothers me about the procedure and arguments being used today is that if we are to have rule changes, those rule changes must be negotiated. We have here a demonstration of the Government using the heavy hand of its vast majority to ram rule changes through the House. I would ask the Hon. Member to lean on his colleagues so that they will negotiate these rule changes rather than ram them through the House just because they have such a large majority. The Hon. Member should keep in mind that he may be simply making the House more efficient for another Party that will take office shortly.

**Mr. Crosby:** Madam Speaker, that is fair enough. If we make the House of Commons more efficient for whomever is in charge of the public affairs, then we will have accomplished something worth while.

I agree with practically everything my colleague has said. I agree with the value of unanimity and with the practice of negotiation. However, he has failed to recognize that that process has gone on for three and a half years and has placed the Standing Orders of the House of Commons in a legal limbo. The time for negotiation has passed and the time for action has come. That action has been taken.

There is no reason why negotiations cannot continue and supplement the motion before the House of Commons. That can happen at any time, and I hope it does. However, that does not mean that the Government has to lie down, roll over and have the House of Commons remain in a state of legal limbo while negotiations continue. There is nothing wrong with a two-track system.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member said that the Opposition should not expect the Government to roll over and lie down. On the other side of the coin, he suggested in an earlier response to my colleague that the Opposition is to roll over and lie down. He said it is to be irresponsible, and should not do all it can quite properly do under the rules to prevent, delay or obstruct legislation or to persuade the Government to change its mind. Is the Hon. Member suggesting that the Opposition is not entitled to use the rules in every way it can to do the job that it is its duty and responsibility to do? Are opposition Members supposed to lie down and roll over?

**Mr. Crosby:** Madam Speaker, I think that is a total misconstruction of what I said. I cannot put a question to the Hon. Member, but if I could I would. There comes a time when the Opposition has done its duty. It has opposed the measure and has made its opposition clear. It has communicated its position to the public and has made the public aware of the issue before the House of Commons. Its job is done, its

duty has been performed and it is time to get on with the business of governing Canada.

It is the duty of the Opposition to oppose measures, bring them to the light of day and have all aspects of the matter fully debated and considered. However, when that job is done, then the Opposition can rest and let that terrible measure which has been imposed go into operation. If this is as bad as the Opposition thinks it is, time will punish the proponents of the measure.

• (1540)

**Mr. Benjamin:** You're advocating an anarchy.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill):** Madam Speaker, Hon. Members, including the Hon. Member for Halifax West (Mr. Crosby) who just spoke, should keep in mind that when we are speaking about the possibility of the Government acting unilaterally to change the Standing Orders—and I say “possibility” because I hope there may yet be an agreement—we are talking about a very unusual occurrence in the life of Parliament. The last time the Standing Orders were changed unilaterally was in 1969 when it was done by a Liberal Government.

At that time the Conservative Party, true to its rhetoric when in Opposition, bewailed the fact that the Liberal Government would act in such a unilateral way. The Conservative Party also bewailed occasions upon which Liberal Governments used time allocation and closure. Yet, it is under the Progressive Conservative Government that time allocation has become a routine matter. It hardly catches the attention of the public any more. The Conservative Party built a political reputation in opposition to the use of time allocation. A great irony has befallen the Conservative Party. It has now become captive to the very political evil which it denounced for so many decades. Such is the tragedy of power, I suppose.

As I said, this is a very unusual move by a Government and is more unfortunate at this time because we are in the fifth year of what I regard as a very important five-year period in the life of Parliament which began with the setting up of the Lefebvre Committee on Parliamentary Reform in 1982 after the parliamentary crisis precipitated by the ringing of the bells for 16 days by the Conservatives, the same people who are now so self-righteous about the use of Routine Proceedings to hold matters up for a couple of days.

We are in the fifth year of this five-year period of reform during which a great many good reforms have been achieved by agreement. I am concerned that by moving to act unilaterally the Government will bring an end to that spirit. We will be able to demarcate those years; 1982-87 Parliamentary Reform, Rest in Peace. From here on in it will be parliamentary war with regard to how the Government and the Opposition relate to each other.

I do not say that to be rhetorical or cute. I say it because I have a genuine concern that that which I and a number of