

Procedure and Organization

appear only on certain days as they had work to do in their offices and questions were to be asked on the days they were present in the house. This had some logic to it. But what are the parliamentary secretaries for? They should be in the house when the ministers are not. On one occasion when someone wanted to ask a question of a parliamentary secretary, he was told that the parliamentary secretary was to be seen and not heard, just like a bad child. The whole purpose despite the reason given by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), was to down-grade parliament and prevent questions being asked.

There are many other matters, one or two of which I have already alluded to. I try not to be repetitious. Having been a member of the house for quite some time, I have noticed various things over the years. In the last few years some ill feeling has been engendered in parliament as a whole. I think hon. members will agree this has certainly prevented the satisfactory working of parliament. You can have all the rules you want, but if people are not disposed to co-operate there are always means of evading the rules. No one knows of these attempts better than Your Honour.

There has to be a feeling of good will and mutual co-operation. Without that parliament simply cannot work. This parliament started off on the right foot. There were a number of new personalities in high places and 100-odd new members untainted by some of the activities and prejudices of the past. The picture looked pretty good. In some of the committees there were many new members from both sides of the house. Unquestionably they tried to get along and to be non-partisan. Their attempts have been frustrated by some of the leaders on the government side.

It is a great pity that the government house leader (Mr. Macdonald), no doubt at the behest of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), is insisting on this rule being passed. Although the minister protests it is not very important, it is important enough to hold up the house for weeks in order to push it through. It is bad enough to attempt to cut off debate. I will not go into that because other members have discussed it on other occasions. But what is almost as bad is the fact that the atmosphere in the house is being soured by the activities of the government house leader (Mr. Macdonald). Once that is done, it cannot be undone. Once the atmosphere has been soured, members constantly eye each other with suspicion and no longer speak to each other in the corridors.

We have had a good many difficulties in making the committee system work, but generally speaking there has been considerable co-operation in the house during the present session, perhaps better than in any other parliament since I have been here. Despite some difficulties in the committees, members try to work on a friendly basis. If the present atmosphere in the house is soured much more, I think it will be a very safe prediction that it will not be easy to conduct the business of the house in the future, and certainly it will be more difficult in committees.

I feel the whole plan of the government is to downgrade this institution and to replace it *de facto* with some form of presidential government. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and his two cohorts have indicated this is so. All the activities of the government in the present session of parliament have corroborated this evidence. I hope parliament will see fit to reject the attempt of the government house leader (Mr. Macdonald) to insist on forcing through rule 75c. As I have already said, such a rule would only be one more nail in the coffin of parliament, perhaps the last nail.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we are here today to discuss an amendment to the recommendation contained in the report of the committee and, more specifically, to fight proposed rule 75c. We are ready to stay for the days and weeks that may be necessary to win this fight. Quite frankly, it is a matter of some regret to me that hon. members are compelled to stay here during a time when they could be doing something else. It is not quite as inconvenient for me and most of the ministers as it is for other members of the house. I have a home here, as have most of the ministers, but most of the other members do not. This situation is causing them not only a good deal of personal inconvenience but is preventing them from doing other things that urgently require their attention. I regret this, but we are dealing with a matter of the greatest importance and we must be prepared to fight just as long as is necessary.

● (3:30 p.m.)

Spokesmen for the government say that they need 75c in order to get through their legislative program. I say quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that 75c, even if adopted, would not enable or assist the government in getting through its legislative program. The government can get through a substantial legislative program only with the co-operation of the