

Procedure and Organization

with them or not they had a right to be heard in this house.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Saltsman: It would seem from the arrogance exhibited on the other side of the house that members over there would like to see the world created in their own image and that they would like to see this whole house peopled with people of their kind. That is not the way it is going to be. When you look at the membership of the House of Commons you see the people of Canada. Some Canadians are arrogant, and this attitude is reflected in those on the other side of the house. Whether or not one likes the members in this house, they are here because the electorate of the country decided they were to be their representatives. The government has never had any difficulty finding support for even the harshest measures when the House of Commons thought those measures should be passed. I again refer to the flag debate of 1964-65. It was not the government that had the courage to call for closure. This was done by a member of the Conservative party who said: We are killing ourselves. This debate has to end. That sentiment was expressed by other parties.

● (3:00 p.m.)

Hon. members opposite have very short memories if they forget this institution has a way of correcting things that go wrong. Many of us love this institution; we care for it and do not want to see it dragged down. I hope that respect exists in hon. members opposite. Under our system of responsible government the electorate gives the government party all the legal powers of a dictatorship. Let us not be squeamish about that. Under responsible government the party in power has the powers of a dictatorship, albeit temporarily. Some of these powers are necessary. However, they are modified and the people of this country do not become too concerned about the strength of the powers because they know there is in the House of Commons the tradition of not abusing them. Nobody uses all the power he has. The people of Canada also know there is an opposition which has countervailing powers.

We are being asked to enlarge the already dictatorial power of government and diminish the power of the opposition. We are, in effect, being asked to upset a balance that is necessary and which in the long run will not work in the best interests of this institution. Government already controls information in this

country. It floods the press gallery with press releases. The government has access to advertising. It brings in a labour code and Canada Pension Plan and claims credit for them, even though the opposition fought hard for these measures. The government takes all the credit for measures such as these and advertisements concerning them carry the pictures of the responsible ministers.

How much more power does the government really need? How much more should it have? Has it made out a case for additional power? I do not think it has. The government claims there have been substantial changes in our committees system. I do not understand how committees can overcome the already enlarged areas of authority the government possesses. As important as rules are, no set of rules can be devised to guarantee co-operation in the house if consent is absent or there is no desire to make things work. I say this with the greatest frankness, Mr. Speaker: Even if the government gets 75c, what will it have? If the opposition decides to take four days to deal with every measure introduced by the government, almost nothing will be done in the house. The government may be successful in having a specific piece of legislation passed, but how much of its program will go through?

In the final analysis it is the mood of parliament that determines how much legislation goes through. Proposed rule 75c creates an unco-operative mood in the house, and in the long run the government will jeopardize its hopes for a successful program. This is a truism; it is true of the home, as well as the factory, and it is true of the relationship between business and labour. There has to be consent, agreement and understanding of each other's role. The government is going back to an autocratic age. I would have thought that with all the talk about participatory democracy the government understood what democracy was, but it does not understand anything about it. Democracy survives, and institutions like this survive, because there is consent and willingness on the part of people to make it work.

It is true that there is a great deal more efficiency when you have an absolute dictatorship. All dictators love that; they do not have to answer to anyone for what they are doing. Democracy may be considered to be an inefficient system; let us face it. But is this a factory? Is it General Motors? Is this the type of institution we have here, or is it the forum of the Canadian people? Do we pretend there