

*Procedure and Organization*

than two hours? It will leave just about time for the leaders of the various opposition parties to make a short statement, and that is all. What opportunity will a new member on the opposition side have, who, like some of the government members, is in the backbenches? What opportunity will he have to make the views of his constituents known? I feel it is my right to speak here on behalf of my constituents. I believe my right to speak here will be severely limited by contemplated rule 75c.

In rising today to speak in this debate I am acutely conscious of what a tremendous impact the proposed changes will have on parliamentary democracy in Canada. As a relatively new member of parliament may I say I was attracted to the party to which I belong because I felt it stood for change, innovation and progress. Since coming to Ottawa I have not been disappointed. The New Democratic Party caucus both now and in the past has shown a marked acceptance of change. Certainly in view of the increasing role of government in our modern society some compromise must be reached. The government is taking over an extended role in the society in which we live and some compromise is inevitable. A compromise must be reached between one or two basically opposing forces.

The first of these forces is the need to bring a heavier legislative program before the house each year. Of course the second is the contradictory force of competition in view of the limited time available and the need to examine more thoroughly legislation and the estimates that come before the house. Everybody understands the problem. I think everyone who is sent here has thought about how to get more done in less time while continuing to ensure the right of hon. members to bring to this house their views and the views of their constituents. I do not think anybody argues about that.

Reasonable men are sympathetic about this problem and are searching for an equitable way to solve it. We know this and we know of the efforts made by the special committee on procedures of this house. This committee provides an example of intelligent discussion by men who sought to bring a century old practice up to date, to meet the needs of modern society. Except for the gag rule in 16A and 75c, which is the bastard child of 16A, and possibly with some reservations about the committee system approach to supply, the procedure committee work deserves commendation from all corners of the house.

All change is not necessarily progress. Our country today is beset with an increasing cynicism about parliament, government and politicians generally. Many people feel that government is too big, that it is too remote, and too much beyond their control. Now do you get closer to the people if you do not let their elected members speak? During the recent election campaign I encountered a large number of people who said they were not going to vote. When I inquired why, their replies added up to a shrug and the expression that it would make little difference. I was often asked what difference would it make who got their votes, and what chance would they have with just one vote to influence government direction.

Alienation of this kind is all too common. I believe it is on the increase. What we need to combat this kind of electoral drop-out-ism is not the imposition of 75c but a greater opportunity for members of parliament to participate, to suggest, and to speak in this house. We do not need the imposition of rules that prevent them from doing just that.

● (5:00 p.m.)

Much of the debate on the committee report, whether or not it has been stated in so many words, has been concerned with the individual member's concept of what parliament is really meant to be. I believe everybody would agree that the root of the word "parliament" means a place where people speak. This is how it was conceived. I remind the government that the people of Fraser Valley West sent me here to speak for them on issues of concern. Further, I was elected in precisely the same manner as any other member of the house, whether he be an opposition backbencher, member of the government party, or cabinet member. We were all elected by popular vote. Therefore, I believe I have precisely the same right to speak as anyone in the house, unless I give it up to accept a suggestion on time limit put forward by my house leader.

I will fight any attempt to take away that right. I am not very pleased when anyone attempts to gag or muzzle me, and proposed Standing Order 75c would do just that. The imposition of rules which are unacceptable to parliament concerns me greatly. We should be very careful to see this does not happen, because alienation will grow, not diminish, if situations such as this are allowed to prevail.

It is all very well to say that we do not move quickly enough in dealing with business