

Procedure and Organization

Mr. St. Laurent made what I thought was a most courageous reply. Obviously he had given some thought to the matter and had prepared himself to reply. He said that this could be done legally, that under the constitution parliament could pass a resolution, send it to the King, who was the monarch in those days, and ask for it to be laid before the British parliament, and that in this way the B.N.A. Act could be amended to take away the use of the French language. To quote his exact words as recorded at page 2621 of *Hansard* of June 18, 1946, he said:

Legally I say it can. The situation appears to me to be this. There are persons and nations who reach a high estate in the affairs of men, and the high estate they reach imposes upon them high obligations. There was no obligation on the Tribune Festus to say to King Agrippa that he could not deliver Paul to the Jews when they requested that he be put to death. It occurs to one, however, that they also had reached a high estate, which imposes a corresponding obligation.

And then Mr. St. Laurent said:

I copied out of the Bible on the table of this house, from the Acts, the quite natural statement of Festus:

"It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him."

Then in two or three paragraphs on pages 2621 and 2622 of *Hansard* for that day—and I invite hon. members to read those paragraphs—Mr. St. Laurent went on to indicate some of the things that his ancestors of French speaking origin had gone through. He spoke about some of the things that had been done, but he declared that certain wrongs would not be committed because, like the Romans, we had reached a higher estate. Finally, he ended with these words:

If it is fair, if it is just, if it is proper according to the standards of human decency, it will be done; if it is unfair, if it is unjust, if it is improper, all members of this house will say, "It is not our manner to do such things."

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. St. Laurent said of the Romans that there were certain things they would not do even though they had the legal right to do them. Mr. St. Laurent said of the government majority of that day—and he spoke of the government majority in any parliament—that though there were certain things they might have the legal right to do, it was not their manner to do them.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

I say to the government opposite that they have the majority and they can put this sort of thing through, wrong though it is. They can throttle parliament in the process and they can interfere with the right of free speech. But I thought that as Liberals it was not their manner to do such things.

• (4:30 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Fortin (Loisbinière): Mr. Speaker, I was happy to hear the eloquent speeches made by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles); I was truly impressed, in view of the fact that they have much more experience in this house than myself, as this is my first session here.

For several reasons, I do not intend to go back as far as 1946, but I would rather consider the present situation of a Canadian member of Parliament, in 1969, in an attempt to see how much standing orders 75A, 75B and 75c are really in the interest of Canadian parliamentary life.

Mr. Speaker, today the Canadian member of Parliament asks himself certain questions, after having done much research. On many occasions, this parliament has attempted to improve its procedure, its operations, to act more effectively, to give a better performance, in order to bring about a better recognition of each hon. member's right. Every improvement has been done in the interest of the Canadian parliament.

I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that my words will not be misinterpreted. The amendments proposed by the government party represent for the most part a definite improvement as regards what exists presently in the Standing Orders. I refer more particularly to Standing Orders 75A and 75B, about which the members of my party are in agreement. In this sense, my party wishes to congratulate the government on his contribution.

However, we are not going any further, we do not support the government any longer, we are opposing and we shall continue to oppose, with all our strength, the adoption of Standing Order 75c for reasons that are not due so much to the past as to the present and that I should like to enumerate briefly in a moment.

Mr. Speaker, to sum up the whole thing, I believe that any majority government, be it made up of Progressive Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats or Créditistes, will