

*Committee to Consider Business of House*

believe that once the people have decided upon those in whom they have confidence it behooves opposition groups and more particularly opposition leaders to remember that in the long run the majority party must be permitted to have its way. If the majority abuse their power the electors will have a chance to express their opinion on the actions or inactions of the government at the time of the next election.

Therefore when we talk about abolishing the closure rule I think we should be very careful. I believe the Prime Minister is most wise in asking that the question of the abolition of closure be referred to the committee on procedure headed by Your Honour, because we could get ourselves into a position which either we or those who come after us might live to regret.

I remember that in the election campaign of 1957 our Prime Minister pledged to the Canadian people the abolition of the closure rule. Now in 1962, five years later, at long last we are faced with action in this regard. The action, of course, as I indicated earlier, consists of a reference of the matter to a committee. There is no assurance that there will not be another election called before this committee is able to consider this particular reference, bring in a report and have that report adequately considered in the house.

As I said before, we in this group welcome this move on the part of the government. However, we should like to qualify our welcome by saying it is our firm conviction that under our system of government, as we have known it in the past, nothing should be done that will prevent a government that has been duly elected from having its way in the long run. In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, the only time opposition political parties have the right to frustrate the will of the government that has been elected by a majority of the people is when the government has completely violated basic human rights as we know them. I am a great believer in the rule of law. There are far too many areas of the world in which the rule of law is subjected to many qualifications. I would not like to see this parliament do anything that would limit the normal supremacy of the will of the majority of the people as expressed on election day.

I hope no one will mistake me when I endorse this particular viewpoint. I believe that the majority is really strengthened by granting every possible right to the opposition and to the minority. I would be the last one who would be prepared to sacrifice any of the existing rights of the opposition or of a minority. If this resolution passes I should

like to see the committee pay very close attention to the possibility of greater consultation amongst the house leaders of the various parties in relation to the order of business and the length of time that ought to be allotted to the various matters coming before us. I believe this is the practice in other democracies to a greater extent than it is here.

I should like also to see the committee pay very close attention to the practice in other democratically elected parliaments relating to the establishment of orderly and ordered sessions of the house. If we knew in advance that we would be here from say January 9 until April 1, then have a month's recess and be here from May 1 until July 1, from September 5 to October 31—these are only arbitrary dates—and then have a recess for the months of November and December, I believe our house leaders and our party whips would very soon accommodate themselves to the business at hand. I know this practice prevails in a number of other countries, and I should like to recommend it in all sincerity for the serious consideration of the committee. I believe that if we had this kind of arrangement we would not be engaged in a debate as to whether or not the closure rule ought to be abolished.

There is another recommendation I should like to make, not to the committee but to the government itself. I believe an attempt should be made to have the blue book of estimates a little more accurate than it is at the moment. I notice a growing tendency on the part of the government to introduce increasingly large amounts by way of supplementary estimates. In this particular session I believe we are about to be faced with the fourth list of supplementary estimates. I understand, though I may have been misinformed, that the sum total of the four lists of supplementary estimates equalled 25 per cent of the main estimates in the blue book. Surely this is a flaw, when departments are asked in October to prepare their estimates and submit them to treasury board, yet many months later we are faced with the fact that the estimation of these departments has been wrong by 25 per cent.

I believe this is a habit that is becoming almost an evil so far as orderly parliamentary procedure is concerned. The government is providing the opposition with an opportunity for delaying the business of the house and, as the hon. member for Bonaville-Twillington mentioned, for unnecessary debate. I would appeal to the government henceforth to order departments to attempt to reduce the amount that it may be necessary to request in supplementary estimates.