

*Procedure and Organization*

will come when members will be as proud as they are now of this particular chamber. It is rather interesting to note that the very chair in which Your Honour sits is made of wood from the roof of Westminster Hall and from Nelson's flagship. Westminster Hall is that great English hall where the law courts of England sat for so many years and from where many of our great laws and traditions were handed down.

This is a place of freedom, as is indicated by the accoutrements that we have here, and as such we should revere it and be honoured to be members here. We should stand on guard to prevent anybody from destroying our rights and democratic privileges.

It is with a feeling of nostalgia that I enter this debate tonight because my memory goes back to a few years ago when an arrogant government majority tried to curtail debate in the house, as will be done by the use of rule 75c. In 1955 an arrogant government tried to change a piece of legislation on which there had been a time limit of three years. I refer to the emergency powers legislation of 1951. In 1955, the government of the day thought: Why worry about a time limit? Let us change this legislation. What did they want to do? They wanted to extend those wartime emergency powers by removing the time limit on the legislation, thus giving the government arbitrary powers over every segment of our economy in peacetime, the same as had been necessary during the war years.

I say again, Mr. Speaker, that I take part in this debate with nostalgia because the debate to which I referred was instituted by a man who was a great Canadian. As an administrator during the war years he had done much to unite the whole Canadian economy in an all-out war effort. He brought together the economic forces of our farms, our manufacturing agencies, our mines and our forests into a unit which helped in the second world war by supplying food, munitions, clothing, lumber, and all the things necessary to support our forces and to help feed, clothe and supply a great many of the components assisting our allies during that terrific struggle.

● (10:10 p.m.)

I say this with a feeling of nostalgia, because that man bore the same name as myself; he was referred to tonight by the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette), and his action at that time was the beginning of his downfall and of the downfall of his

own party. I refer to the late Right Hon. C. D. Howe. He was something like our Prime Minister today who last session coined the phrase "We are the masters of this house." The Hon. C. D. Howe coined the phrase: "If we want to get away with it, who is going to stop us?" Mr. Howe did not like the House of Commons. We find this feeling exemplified today. As I said in my opening remarks, it would appear as though some would like to see the walls of this place torn down. There were days when those on the government side derided us in opposition, saying "Let the people decide". Well, in 1957 the people did decide, and in 1958 they did so even more emphatically.

The defence production debate left such a bad taste in the mouth of the Minister of Defence Production that he made up his mind to bring in some form of closure immediately debate was instituted in the following year should there be objection to his proposals. This is what he did. How similar this is to the situation which now faces us. The government of the day was forced to withdraw its 16A proposal before Christmas. Then, in the closing days of the present session they bring in a report which if adopted would create an untenable position for the opposition. It is interesting, too, Mr. Speaker, to recall that the debate to which I referred earlier took place in 1955, 20 years after the Liberal government had been elected in 1935. Today, just one year after its election, the Liberal government is trying by all the means available to it to force measures on the house which would destroy democratic principles by curtailing debate, by taking away from parliament the opportunity to debate an important issue long enough to make the people of Canada aware of the implications of a particular piece of legislation or to provide an opportunity for a vigilant press and a vigilant public to examine thoroughly each piece of legislation presented to it. This is of the utmost importance, Mr. Speaker, as is pointed out in an editorial which recently appeared in both the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* and the *Guelph Mercury*. I should like to quote from one of these editorials. It is headed: "Voter Feedback Important in Commons Rules Debate."

If, as seems likely, Parliament is headed for a prolonged and bitter battle over proposed rules changes, events will be guided to a large extent by public reaction.

"Feedback from constituencies," is the way most MPs describe this. The feedback, in the form of letters, telegrams and telephone calls, pours into the offices of MPs whenever Parliament bogs down on a major issue.