

Procedure and Organization

future of parliament as to be tantamount to an attempt to subvert and destroy parliament as we know it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: If this motion can be put, sir, how far do we go before we become a chamber of deputies comparable to the kind of chamber established by General de Gaulle? How far are we from authoritarian institutions? If Your Honour puts this question tonight, supported by closure, then this house can step by step be stripped of every privilege and every authority which remains to it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: It might be said this could only be done upon the authority of a majority of members of this house. Mr. Speaker, the government, the external authority referred to by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), controls the members who constitute the majority in this house much more effectively and much more firmly than George III was able to do with members of the British house, no matter how hard he tried.

It is true the methods are different. I am not casting any reflection on members who support the government opposite, and I say this quite earnestly, but I would point out that members of this house who support the government, as conditions have evolved, are not interested in preserving the powers or the privileges of the House of Commons. It has been said they have been silenced by the government. I do not make this charge today but I do say they are given very little by way of a role to play in the house by the government. What private members who support the government are seeking is not authority or privilege in this house, particularly. What they are seeking is a share in the power of government; they are seeking to take some part in the formulation of decisions by the government. This is what motivates them, principally; they are interested in sharing the power of government but they have not the slightest interest in trying to control the operations of the government or in exercising the powers and privileges of the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: So it really means nothing to say in these circumstances that the government has the support of a majority in the house, since the majority upon which it relies is, in the nature of things, not interested in

[Mr. Stanfield.]

preserving the powers and privileges of the House of Commons. Thus we have a government, with the help of its friends in the house, using a gag not simply to get a measure through the chamber but to reduce severely the privileges of the house by compelling the adoption of some new form of closure. I do not know whether this is a new aspect of big "L" Liberalism, or what it is. I think it is a new form of betrayal, a new form of treason on the part of the intellectuals opposite. Regardless of this, sir, I say to you, as you have been reminded already today, that it is your duty to protect the minorities in this house. I should like to make a reference to a description of a great Speaker in the British house, Speaker Onslow.

Onsloes show of independence at the outset of his career as Speaker did not belie his subsequent conduct... The forms of proceedings, he held, as instituted by our ancestors, operated as a check and control on the action of ministers and they were in many instances a shelter and a protection to the minority against the attempts of power.

In view of what the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has said, I do not need to expand upon Your Honour's role as a protector of minorities, nor does Your Honour—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It is five o'clock and according to the standing order we would normally bring it to the attention of hon. members that we have to go on to private members' business. Hon. members may wish to allow the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) to complete his presentation. Is that the wish of the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Baldwin: In view of the nature and the seriousness of the point which is being argued, and since Your Honour should be apprised of all the arguments pro and con—the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. MacEachen) obviously intends to participate—perhaps there would be willingness on the part of the house to dispense with private members' hour and continue until six o'clock.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): That would be our wish, too.

Mr. Lind: I agree to dispense with private members' hour and to carry on with the business of the house now before us.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I was simply reminding you, even though it might scarcely be necessary, of your duty to protect minorities in the house. This is the issue we are discussing today. The protection of minorities