

Procedure and Organization

which it might have been said that the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton refused to obey instructions of his committee and move a motion. We may well arrive at a situation in which the government representative on that group duly appointed under the standing order may say, "We care nothing at all for the decision of the majority of the committee," and the minister or government house leader may refuse to move the motion. What will happen then, Mr. Speaker. The minister can say immediately, "There is no agreement," even though the majority of that committee may have agreed. The result may be that the minister may say, "There being no agreement under 75B, I am proceeding under 75c to move a motion to impose limitation of time on terms acceptable to the government only." That is an inevitable result of putting together proposed standing orders 75B and 75c. I therefore say that you may as well toss 75B out the window.

Mr. Sianfield: You might as well toss the government out.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): That is where the hon. gentleman's party failed last year. His party is quite liable to toss him out.

• (3:40 p.m.)

Mr. Baldwin: The trouble is, Mr. Speaker, that inflation has not got the government up high enough. It would not hurt enough at this time. The effect of this is very simple. Because of the government's insistence in proceeding as it has, I am afraid the opportunities for reaching a consensus, particularly having in mind the character of this government and the way it operates, are going to be extremely limited.

What we obviously have is a proposed new standing order, of which the government proposes to use only 75c. This is the whole purpose of the exercise. The rest is simply chocolate covering over the pill. I have no doubt it will be the intention of the government to move on 75c without regard to the duty cast on the minister to follow the majority decision under 75B. The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton suggested that there would be ten days. I am not going to get into the controversy which has arisen from the repartee passing back and forth across the floor. I think hon. members on this side made it quite plain what he said.

If there is an issue, a crisis or a new and novel proposal advocated by the government and brought into this house, I suggest that

[Mr. Baldwin.]

the ten days between the time the debate is initiated and the time the last question is put is not adequate. We have many duties in this house. One of them is that hon. members, if they are in fact performing their duties, must maintain the closest liaison between the people of their constituencies in particular and the people of Canada in general. In the exercise of that responsibility they must from time to time keep their fingers on the pulse of public thinking. What do people want? What will be the impact of government proposals being made. For this reason, if by exercising their responsibility in a responsible way they become convinced that what the government is proposing is wrong and must not be passed, they have a duty, using this house as a forum and using the public media to report our deliberations, to make a case so that the public may be aroused. They must gather together public opinion to such an extent that the government will be compelled to yield. If it does not yield, it must face the consequences of a general election.

I submit that ten days is inadequate for that purpose. I am not talking about the question of the number of days of debate, I say it is inadequate. Having in mind the size and the vastness of the diverse economic and social configurations of Canada there must be a reasonable opportunity for the opposition to make their case for the people of Canada. This cannot be done in ten days. The house should not allow the government by the passage of this measure to proceed in that way.

Last December I might have been tempted to go along with 75c, not in its present form but with some possible variations. But I had some suspicions about the conduct of the government and what it was likely to do. I had some opportunity to see some of their members in action. They had not yet manifested the full strength of their contempt, their disregard for parliament, their authoritarianism, and the casual and callous contempt which the Prime Minister shows in his treatment of this House of Commons. That had not yet manifested itself in full. Today, six or seven months later, we have seen this. Any doubts I might have had in December have now been resolved against the government and against the passage of a rule of this kind. I would consider myself derelict in my duty if I did not say as strongly as I could that this government has not shown that it has earned the right to secure the passage of a measure of this kind.