

Procedure and Organization

the new rules, produced a certain oneness in spirit so far as the need to reform the rules of the house was concerned. For the first time this session we operated according to those rules. Most of the things which hindered and blocked progress in the immediate past are no longer possible because the new rules have eliminated those roadblocks and hindrances. If that is so, and I am convinced it is, then why is this closure rule necessary now? I could understand it if there had been a major filibuster such as we had in respect of the pipe line debate in 1956. If this had been the case there might have been some justification for strengthening the closure authority so far as the operation of the rules of the house are concerned. But there is no such circumstance at this time.

All this closure rule, 75c, will do is force on this house a rule which, so far as the practical application and functioning of this house is concerned, is absolutely unnecessary. Perhaps there is an intention in the mind of the Prime Minister or in the will of the government to bring in seriously controversial legislation which they will be able to force through without having to answer to the public, as would be required normally under rule 33 for the application of closure. If that is the case, then we are moving from a parliamentary democracy toward a dictatorship. I do not like to use that word; it bothers me. I do not like some of the remarks which have been tossed back and forth here tonight because I do not think they are really becoming of men and women in our position. I want to say, however, that there is a genuine fear and alarm among the members of the opposition which justifies what is taking place. I did not condone, and publicly said that I did not condone, some of the things which happened and which were said to the Prime Minister when he was out west. However, by his very action and by the very flippant remarks he so often flings out, he invites that kind of action.

That is the reason what I say tonight is correct. I am not a prophet of doom, but this kind of thing is inevitable. The house leader, by his very attitude and by his very irritating offhand remarks, invites the reaction that has been evidenced here tonight. This is not just another debate. This is not a stupid filibuster. This is not hypocrisy. So far as we on this side of the house are concerned, this is a struggle toward the preservation of freedom of speech of the representatives of the people. It applies to members on the other side of the house as well because they will not always form the government.

I should like to give a bit of advice to the hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth (Mr. Gibson) who is now making so much noise. He would be well advised to keep his mouth shut and listen a little more—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Thompson: —because his depth of experience in the house does not, in my opinion, give him the ability to understand and assess what is actually taking place.

I have another very important question which I should like to ask. Why, just two days before this house was to recess for the summer on completion of its second semester, which is the terminology which has been adopted in defining the sections of our different sessions, was it necessary for the house leader to re-introduce into this house the closure rule, 75A, 75B and 75c? Rule 75c is the equivalent of rule 16A which was so ignominiously tucked in the drawer some months ago. I now understand the Prime Minister, in explaining the withdrawal of 16A to the public of Canada on a national network, said this was just a trap in order to force through some of the less agreeable rules he had in mind.

• (9:40 p.m.)

Why was it necessary to bring in closure? We were all getting along well. Was there any hold-up in respect of any piece of legislation? Was there any major piece of legislation on the order paper that had not been dealt with in so far as the obvious intent of the government was discernible? There has been none in so far as I am aware. Again, I would say that the new rules have worked well. They represent many basic improvements, although they are not yet adequately proven in practice. At this time they represent a tremendous change for the good.

May I also remind the new members of the house, particularly those on the government side, that these rules did not result from any partisan decision or politics, but were the result of years, months and hours of working together in an all party committee. A great deal of study and careful consideration was given, and finally an all party agreement was reached in respect of these rules. It is because of these rules we have been able to make good progress.

What is it that is motivating the Prime Minister, the house leader and those who are working closely with them in forcing this