

*Procedure and Organization*

This government, as well as any government in the future, must be aware of the fact that the opposition does in fact legally exist. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, you will allow me to read another quotation. I do not like reading quotations. I must say I am not the most brilliant orator nor am I the most brilliant speechmaker, but when I see something good I like to pass it on. I was going to say "pass it on to my stupid friends", but that would not be parliamentary. I should like to refer to Sir Kenneth Wheare's book entitled "Legislatures". I cannot give the citation, but it is really up to date. It was published by the Oxford University Press, New York and Toronto, in 1968. I wish to quote from page 77. The title of this particular chapter is, "Making the Government Behave".

**Mr. Stanfield:** Oh! How do you do that?

**Mr. Alexander:** With the general agreement of the house, perhaps I should read the whole book.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Alexander:** I wish to refer to just a few paragraphs. The first appears at page 77:

A famous American, Lawrence Lowell, professor of government at Harvard, and later president of the university, wrote in his *Government of England: His Majesty's Opposition* embodies the greatest contribution of the nineteenth century to the art of government.'

Did hon. members in the government know that?

**Some hon. Members:** No.

**Mr. Alexander:** The quotation continues:

We need not settle an order of merit in these matters; we can easily concede that the invention was important. Indeed, it is not too much to say that in the British constitution today the office of Leader of the Opposition is regarded as of no less importance—though it may be less desired—than that of Prime Minister.

Is that not significant to hon. gentlemen? This institution of ours comes from the Mother of Parliaments, and that is what is said by a great historian. Let me carry on a little further. Do hon. members realise that by the Ministers of the Crown Act of 1937 a salary was provided for the Leader of the Opposition? In that same act, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition were recognized as being of fundamental importance to the system of government. What is important is that Canada probably was the first country in the world, as far back as 1905, which decided to pay a salary to the Leader of the

[Mr. Alexander.]

Opposition. A great figure at that particular time, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, then prime minister, said:

The Leader of the Opposition under our present system is just as much a part of the constitutional system of government as the Prime Minister himself.

Where is Mr. Trudeau today? I hope he reads my speech. I am not the best speaker, but I hope he pays me the courtesy of saying, "I wonder what that hon. member said about me". Let me continue with the quotation from this book. I find this very important, particularly when we know this government is attempting to emasculate the opposition. Do the members of the government really know what the opposition is all about? I should like to read from page 79:

—in so far as one of the functions of a legislature is to make the government behave, the chief part in performing that function falls to the opposition and its leader. It is important to stress that they are not expected to undertake the whole of this task. The government's supporters are not supposed to be mere yes-men; influence can be exerted from outside the legislature, as we explained in Chapter 3, by individuals or by organized interests, which help to keep the government up to the mark. But in the legislature itself, though government supporters may grumble behind the scenes and occasionally in public—

Isn't that so true?

—it is the members of the Opposition who are charged with the duty of examining and criticizing what the government has done and proposes to do.

• (8:50 p.m.)

Through questions to ministers in the house, through motions of censure and no confidence, through the debates that accompany the passing of financial legislation and so on, the opposition in the British and other Commonwealth legislatures carries on its task. And the leading idea upon which it is organized is that it offers itself before the country as an alternative government. It criticizes upon the understanding that, given the opportunity, it could do better itself. In this way, so runs the theory at least, it is possible to have not only responsible government but responsible opposition also.

I could say much about the latter, but about the former I am devoid of words. The introduction of 75c gives a minister the power to arbitrarily propose the setting of a time limit on debate. This proposal ridicules the writer, Sir Kenneth Wheare. It ridicules his conclusion and makes a mockery of parliamentary rights.

I must stand up and be counted as voicing my objection to a rule which appears to me to be a deliberate attempt to emasculate the role of the opposition. Rule 75c can only be interpreted as a calculated, selfish, partisan