

Procedure and Organization

and which no one here can say has in any sense circumscribed the democratic effectiveness of the opposition parties there; a rule which has been employed by both Conservative and Labour governments of Britain and which has been retained without repeal through several changes of government. Nevertheless and notwithstanding this need, notwithstanding this precedent, notwithstanding this evidence, we are still told by the opposition that this provision will destroy parliament.

Really now, Mr. Speaker! It is not this provision which endangers parliament, but rather such inaccurate talk as will lead Canadians and others elsewhere to doubt the ability of the parliamentary system to work honestly;—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Trudeau:—such inflated accusations as will cause Canadians and others to lose faith in parliament as a means of conducting the legislative business of this and other countries.

The landing this week of a man on the moon is vivid evidence of the speed of change in men's lives. In a timeframe of less than seven decades in length, a period shorter than man's biblical life span, man has ceased to remain earthbound and has reached out into his universe with a skill and a success that promises future change at an even more bewildering a rate of acceleration. If this parliament, which is charged with the responsibility of assimilating these technological changes into legislation for the benefit of Canadians, cannot keep pace, then Canadians will seek other institutions which are capable of doing so. We have no choice. Parliament is not inviolate to rules of nature. It must be relevant. It will adapt or it will perish.

This government has revealed to the people of Canada how it chooses to be adjudged. I do not hesitate to declare again the confidence of my government in the future of Canada, in the future of Canadians, and in the future of this parliament of which we are all so justly proud. This proposed change will not weaken parliament, Mr. Speaker, it will strengthen it and permit it to accomplish the great tasks of nation building which devolve upon it and which now demand attention. These rules, Mr. Speaker, are needed now.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I can tell hon. members in the house that
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I listened to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau)—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Far more than government members ever did.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I do not claim the status of the Prime Minister in this house but he was given a very careful and respectful hearing and I think other hon. members should be given the same careful and respectful hearing.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

• (8:30 p.m.)

Mr. Lewis: I was saying that, like all hon. members here in this house, I listened to the Prime Minister with great interest. It saddens me to say this, but I think in all honesty I must say I have seldom heard a speech which contained such a complete distortion of the position of the opposition.

The Prime Minister stated that the position of the opposition was to claim the right, and he used this word, to "indefinitely"—and he did use it a number of times—indefinitely delay the debate on legislation. That is an utter, complete, unfair and conscienceless distortion.

Even before this Prime Minister came into this house, and before he joined a political party, there were members in this house—I was one of them, and there were many others—who spoke in this house and all across Canada about the need to change the rules of parliament to make it more efficient.

The reason for that distortion was evident in some of the other things the Prime Minister said. In fact, there was a twofold reason. The first was that he knew the present rule which he has placed before the house is indefensible, autocratic and unworkable. The second reason is that he made such an extravagant distortion of the position of the opposition that he had to defend against the fact, and it is a fact to which I will come back in a minute or two, that all the parties in the house were beginning to move toward a position of accommodation when he, and it must have been he because he is the power in the Liberal party, said there would be no more negotiation, there would be closure—this is what they will take and nothing else.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lewis: I deny utterly, not only in the name of my colleagues, the members of this