

*Motion for Concurrence in Report*

and those whom parliament is sworn to protect. I repeat, we will never accept it.

What is being proposed here? It is proposed that there be a proceedings committee, to be composed probably of the various house leaders, to help arrange the introduction and orderly consideration of the business of the house. So far, so good. We agree that upon the unanimous agreement of the house leaders, subject to the considerations noted in the proposed standing order, the allocation of time for a specific item before the house becomes an order of the house. This is in itself a major departure. It is a considerable convenience for the government, but we do not oppose it. It is founded upon the consent of the various house leaders, and we would be bound by their consent.

Members of the house should be reminded that we have not had any machinery for authorizing house leaders to make effective agreements as to the allocation of time binding on the house. A house leader today has ordinarily not been able to commit his party to terminate a debate within a given time because he could not prevent debate from continuing beyond the time in question. If the rules were changed to translate agreements between house leaders into house orders, as is suggested, the vast majority of the difficulties of the house regarding length of debate would thereby be eliminated. The hon. member himself said there is no reason to believe that house leaders would not co-operate. I suggest we stop there. That in itself would enable a solution of a vast majority of the problems of the house with regard to the orderly arrangement of debates.

But the government is not satisfied with this. What happens if the house leaders have not reached agreement? First of all, there is the convenient provision that would allow the government house leader, sitting alone all by himself, to constitute a quorum. We are told that this is inserted to prevent the other house leaders from boycotting his meetings. But he could very easily end up by having his meetings in the shower at home in the morning.

**Mr. Woolliams:** And then he may boycott himself.

**Mr. Stanfield:** This provision that a quorum may consist of the government house leader, the President of the Privy Council and hon. member for Rosedale (Mr. Macdonald), has to go.

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

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**Mr. Stanfield:** Surely I do not have to elaborate on the point. There is not an impartial observer anywhere who knows anything about this parliament who would not agree that for the sake of parliament and the parliamentary process the present government house leader is one who has to be kept on a very short leash.

But what is much more destructive of parliament is that we are told now to accept that, in the absence of agreement among the house leaders, the government house leader can determine in advance how much consideration any given government measure or batch of measures requires. If I were to employ a form of argument enjoyed apparently by the right hon. Prime Minister, by *reductio ad absurdum* it would be possible for the government house leader, with the support of the majority, to put a whole batch of bills before the house and to insist that they be dealt with at the rate of about ten minutes apiece. There is certainly nothing in the rules to prevent it.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Don't put ideas into his head.

**Mr. Stanfield:** I do not think the house leader needs any tutoring from anybody on this subject. The house leader could determine this for a whole collection of items before a word had been uttered in the house. He could include in his order anything that was on the order paper or before a standing committee and give the house two hours to protest, following which his majority would ram it through the house.

I say this is vicious and absurd. It is a perversion of the parliamentary process to say that the government should be able in advance to decide how much time a batch of bills requires for consideration by this house, how much time is required for clause by clause examination in a standing committee, and how much time is required for debate or discussion before a batch of bills is passed.

It is the natural instinct of every government that has a difficult, unpopular or controversial measure to get it through with as little fuss as possible. A government house leader is the last person in the world to have in effect the power to decide unilaterally and in advance how much consideration should be given to various items of legislation.

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

**Mr. Stanfield:** The rule of closure is still on the books. The hon. member who made the