

Procedure and Organization

house leader, any meaningful negotiations would ever take place, and instead of 75c would be used all along. I remember occasions in this house when governments have taken a very strong position saying that the opposition was not letting legislation go through. Then suddenly the opposition said, "You know, we would not want to be put in this position; let the legislation go through". Then what happened? The government did not have any legislation prepared to bring before the house. The opposition has often been placed in the position of having to call upon the government to bring in legislation.

There have been many instances when legislation has not been ready to be brought before the house, legislation with which the opposition wanted to deal. We in the opposition have said that there are certain problems in this country which must be dealt with, but where is the legislation? It is not here. Instead the government has decided to inflict its stubbornness upon the house.

There would seem to be a special psychology to this parliament which has been sensed by most members who have been here for some time. That psychology depends upon members' reactions to government legislation. When a government brings in a good piece of legislation, or the kind of legislation people want, and which can command the respect of the country, the opposition does not oppose it because the opposition is responsible to the electorate.

Hon. members of the opposition know which legislation must go through, which legislation is important and which legislation should not be opposed. They oppose it in those areas which need to be examined. But the opposition is not foolish. The opposition knows something about what the people of this country need and want, and would not hold up legislation that has significant meaning to the people of the country.

Then there is the matter of the filibustering about which the government speaks so much. One would think the house is continuously occupied in a filibuster and that all we are doing here is filibustering. When we look at the record we find that we have passed an enormous amount of legislation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Saltsman: Even when we had a minority government legislation was passed. When the government sat for years without a majority it was able to get its significant legislation through the house. It went through

[Mr. Saltsman.]

because it was good legislation which the people wanted. I can recall a minister of the government virtually asking the opposition to defeat the government. The opposition did not do so because it knew the legislation that was being brought in was good and desirable legislation. The government knew that no responsible opposition would defeat the government when it was bringing in good legislation. The only time a government has to fear an opposition is when its legislation is bad.

I suggest that by the introduction of 75c the government is attempting to protect itself when it brings in bad legislation from having to bear the consequences of that legislation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Saltsman: There is a thing called feedback. On this side of the house we are as responsive as hon. members over on that side to feedback. I remember an occasion when former Prime Minister Pearson came back mopping his brow because the government had been defeated. He appeared on television and said a number of things to the Canadian people. Within a few days it was obvious to most of us in this house that the Canadian people did not want that government defeated at that time, on that particular issue. The government survived, not because it had the numbers necessary to survive but because the Canadian people wanted it to survive.

There are ways to find out how well a government is doing. All we need do is take a look at the situation in Manitoba to see how the Liberals are doing in Canada as a whole. When by-elections produce members other than of the government party this is a reflection of what goes on in this house. One might think at times that Mr. Speaker does not have control over the events in the house and does not call members to order on questions of irrelevancy. It is interesting, however, to note that as the debates unfold and the longer they progress the more the Chair becomes insistent on relevance. It may be my imagination but it seems to me that very considerable discretion exists with the Chair in this house, and that that discretion is used wisely and well.

A great thing is being made about the fact that the Creditistes put up a long fight on the amendments to the Criminal Code. I might point out that I was in total disagreement with the position taken by the Ralliement des Creditistes at that time. But I want to say one thing; they represented a sizeable block of opinion in this country and whether I agreed