

Procedure and Organization

has spoken so eloquently on so many occasions.

Is freedom threatened by restricting debating time in this house? Regardless of what happens at four o'clock this afternoon that is still the real question. The former prime minister, the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), made a very colourful and controversial speech in the house the other day. He said that 75c is a measure designed to subvert parliament. What did he say in the house when he had the important responsibility of being the Queen's first minister? I quote the right hon. gentleman's remarks as recorded in *Hansard* of July 21, 1960:

I see no reason why that debate should not be reduced so far as the number of days is concerned. Immediately, I suggest that the opposition will say that they are being throttled.

That is what the right hon. gentleman said when faced with the monumental responsibility of government. He said in order to expedite the business of the Canadian people it was necessary effectively and responsibly to limit the length of speeches in the House of Commons. On November 26, 1962, again speaking in the House of Commons, the right hon. gentleman said:

I am not one of those who argues that there should be any interference with the right of hon. members to express themselves, but I do agree with the hon. member that if the house leaders of the parties could get together and apportion the time, it would be a most effective and welcome expedient in order to achieve a high degree of efficiency in parliament. They do it in the United Kingdom, but we have never been able to do it here—

● (3:50 p.m.)

Unfortunately for Canada the reforms about which the right hon. gentleman spoke so wistfully never came to pass under his Prime Ministerial guidance. Perhaps the government of the day, and I do not wish to be critical of that government because things are accomplished by most governments at one time or another, did not present to the house a firm proposal to modernize the house rules, and it is unfortunate for Canada that this was not done years ago.

Is freedom of speech truly being threatened? That is the question about which some fine speeches have been made. The changes proposed in the rules are less stringent than debate limitation measures in other commonwealth jurisdictions. I have here the rules of all the Commonwealth governments—of India,

New Zealand, Pakistan and Australia. Perhaps someone would like to hear how they do things in Australia. That is a country which has been mentioned during this debate. At page 26 of the standing orders of the Australian House of Representatives it is stated:

When any motion of any kind whatsoever has been moved, a minister may at any time declare that the motion is an urgent motion, and, on such declaration, the question "That the motion be considered an urgent motion" shall be put forthwith—no debate or amendment being allowed—and on such question being agreed to, a minister may forthwith move a motion specifying the time which shall be allotted to the motion.

Upon such motion or motions with regard to the allotment of time being moved, no debate thereon shall be allowed for more than 20 minutes, and in speaking thereon no member may exceed five minutes. If the debate be not sooner concluded, then forthwith upon the expiration of that time the Speaker or the Chairman shall put any questions on any amendment or motion already proposed from the Chair.

This is more stringent closure than we have in the House of Commons here.

An hon. Member: That is ordinary closure and you have it now.

Mr. Perrault: No, that is more stringent and it is totally apart from the schedule of government business proposed by the government. We could go through all these Commonwealth standing orders and rules.

An hon. Member: Do it now.

Mr. Perrault: I will do it when I have more time. We are looking at the spiritual cousins of our friends second to my left down there. These proposed changes they say are an affront to the British parliamentary democracy. Last week the device called the guillotine was used by the Labour government in Britain. It is a measure to bring a debate to an end.

Let me read the headline which appeared in the *Ottawa Journal* of July 9. It said, "Wild scene as M.P.'s protest move to impose Guillotine". The article states:

The biggest row in years broke out in the House of Commons Tuesday night as members hurled books, paper missiles and invectives at each other in a dispute over parliamentary boundaries.

The report then continues:

Nearly 500 parliamentarians mounted a clamour of insult over a decision by the government leader in the commons, Fred Peart, to impose a guillotine on a controversial bill affecting parliamentary boundaries... The guillotine, a parliamentary procedural device, sets a deadline for pushing the bill through into law by next Monday—

That is a six day period.