

*Procedure and Organization*

**Mr. Francis:** Mr. Speaker, the government is obliged to present to the house the legislation we have to adopt. But to make sure that we can pass laws, I believe we must first settle the problem concerning the rules of the house.

[*English*]

The basic problem is allocation of time. One of the other devices available to hon. members of the opposition under the new rules we have adopted as we are moving forward to that careful balance between the rights of the opposition and the rights of the government is the use of allotted days for the opposition. There are 25 of these days now provided during a session. Hon. members of the opposition are perfectly free to choose the subjects for debate on these days. Therefore, if they feel there is any abuse or any provision of any legislation which in their opinion should not be passed or has been wrongly presented to the house, or if they feel any measure is being adopted which in their opinion is not in the public interest, they have this additional means by which they can bring about a debate in the House of Commons in order to focus the attention of the public, the newspapers and all the organs of public opinion on these questions. They have this means of safeguarding democratic rights.

**Mr. Barnett:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would permit a question I should like to ask whether in fact the allotted days are a substitute for the old supply motion opportunities of the opposition rather than additional opportunities as he suggested.

**Mr. Francis:** Mr. Speaker, I have had a number of questions from the other side of the house which raise fundamental problems which are not easily or quickly answerable by anyone in this house. In attempting to establish new rules there is a desire to balance two things, the rights of the opposition and the rights of the government. The opposition should have the right to bring matters to the attention of the newspapers and the public which they think are wrong or are against the public interest. Against this, we must adopt measures to expedite the handling of government business and permit some reasonable allocation of time.

Among the innovations are the supply motions, the reference of estimates to the committee and the debate in committee instead of in the house. It is for hon. members to judge the extent to which these innovations are successful. We might note that in other

[Mr. Fortin.]

houses, such as the Mother of Parliaments at Westminster supply is not even referred to committee any more. I believe it is just a matter of tabling and no debate. If the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett) is of the opinion that something has been lost by way of democratic rights in this house, there are avenues open to him to express his opinion and seek to convince other members of this house.

Our rules are changing. We are seeking to balance the obligations of the government to program time against the democratic rights of the opposition in the house. In my opinion, and in the opinion of hon. members on this side of the house, the combination of 75A and 75B is not a sufficient safeguard for a government or for that matter for a party which has a reasonable prospect of having that obligation. These two rules if adopted in their present form in my opinion suffer from a grave difficulty. If one of the opposition parties should object to any one government measure it could place the other two opposition parties in a key position, the control of the house. In the two smaller opposition parties there are 36 members combined. I do not believe that a group that size, as opposed to the 226 members in the other two parties, should have the opportunity to veto and hold up government business. This opportunity should not be granted and, in my opinion, should not be encompassed in the rules of this house.

**Mr. Barnett:** Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct another question to the hon. member. I wonder whether in effect he is suggesting that if agreement were reached to drop from the proposed Standing Orders 75B he would also agree to the dropping of 75c which would leave only 75A.

**Mr. Francis:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure there are matters which could be discussed along the lines the hon. member has suggested. However, I am not able to say what the position of the party to which I belong would be.

**Mr. P. B. Rynard (Simcoe North):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in this debate because there are members here who are willing to sacrifice their summer holidays for the principles of democracy and freedom. They will continue to do so, and either they will win or remain here all summer. We find that in the dying days of this session, after the Prime Minister's (Mr. Trudeau) timetable had been met, all at once we are told this closure clause, rule 75c, is to be brought in without any reason or excuse. Mr. Speaker,