

Procedure and Organization

accept a different method of operation in order to carry on their business.

I came to Ottawa on the basis that I had been elected to a democratic institution. I was elected a member of the House of Commons in order to participate in debate on public issues and to make decisions thereon. I was not elected as the member for Regina East to accept a muzzle and I do not intend to accept a muzzle under any circumstances. I intend to fight proposals such as rule 75c in every way possible. When the government and its supporters come to their senses, we can resume reasonable discussions about the rules and urgent items of public business. We can deal with some of the items referred to in the question period today at any time the government may wish.

● (9:30 p.m.)

The government knows that rules 75A and 75B are reasonable and that they have been accepted in principle by the opposition. They provide for time allocation when there is full agreement among the house leaders of the various parties. They provide for determination of time allocation when all parties but one agree on the allocation. Why not accept rules 75A and 75B, find out how they work, and if they do not meet the need then let the matter be discussed further.

The government should know by now the position of the opposition. As I mentioned previously, rule 16A was voted to a standstill. Rule 75c will also be voted to a standstill. As soon as members opposite understand this we can begin to make some progress. Why not do it now? Why not adopt the slogan of one of the government's own agencies, "Do it now"? Why does the government not use intelligence and avoid this senseless confrontation? It is only rule 75c that stands in the way. Rules 75A and 75B represent a reasonable solution.

We are reasonable men and women. I suppose I should say woman, because regretfully, Mr. Speaker, there is only one woman in the house. I can assure all members that the hon. lady is a reasonable woman. If we are reasonable then we will reach agreement by adopting rules 75A and 75B. Let's get on with the job.

As a result of listening to some hon. members across the way, both in debate and private conversation, I gained the impression that part of their motivation for presenting this particular rule change which we find so objectionable is based on fear. It is based on the fear of veto, that somehow the opposition

will be successful in vetoing and hold up government business. Several hon. members have already pointed out the example of the Criminal Code debate and the extensive amendments proposed by members of the Creditiste Party. This situation could have been dealt with under proposed rule 75B. I have no argument with the proposition that some of the debate on the amendment to the abortion section of the Criminal Code was unreasonable. I say that as one who in fact had some sympathy for some of the amendments in respect of abortion. As has been pointed out, this situation could have been dealt with under proposed rule 75B. I am sure a reasonable agreement could have been reached.

If the members of the government do, in fact, hold such fears about what the opposition is going to do, I suggest members opposite should consider that members on this side of the house have just as much right to be fearful of what the government is going to do, what its intentions are and what actions and decisions it will take in the future. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the manner in which the government has forced debate on this particular proposal at the present time, knowing there was going to be strong opposition to rule 75c, is one example that cannot help but increase fears that the government is going to use this rule 75c in an unacceptable way.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that if we are to have a parliament that is going to practice the principles of participatory democracy, about which we heard a good deal over the past year and a half, we are going to have to reject firmly the type of proposal contained in rule 75c. As I stated, we certainly agree with proposed rules 75A and 75B.

Mr. Speaker: I have to interrupt the hon. member since his time has expired. The hon. member cannot continue unless he has unanimous consent of the house.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Théogène Ricard (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, when the measure now before us was introduced, I was far from thinking of speaking to it, first, because I do not consider myself an expert on the rules of the house and secondly, because I believe that the objections raised, both in the house and outside, would make the government understand that rule 75c should be withdrawn in the general interest.