

Procedure and Organization

issue upon us at this time? I do not know the answer but I have my own suspicions. I am sure there are members on the other side of the house who also have their own thoughts regarding this question. I am concerned about this situation.

I have another simple question. Why have none of the great Prime Ministers in the past resorted to this type of action? Why is it that in times of difficulty, and they had their problems, filibusters and disagreements—the records of this institution are full of them since its beginning in 1867—they would sooner take a longer time than they thought necessary? Why is it that they respected the opposition, whatever party was in power? I am convinced that it was because they had an appreciation of the value of parliament in a free, democratic society.

There are those who say the debate on the Criminal Code was a useless filibuster and a waste of time. I do not believe it was.

Mr. Woolliams: The Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) does not think so.

Mr. Thompson: No, the Minister of Justice does not think so either, but there are those who point their fingers over here to my left at the Cr ditistes and accuse them of a filibuster.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Thompson: I was one of those who agreed with them. I did not support the Criminal Code amendments. However, I did not agree with the length of time we were required to take to come to a final vote. To many of them I said that the opposition had gone far enough. But let me say specifically to hon. members on the other side of the house that their protest was not a filibuster. It was rather a substantial protest on behalf of those people they represent. That party had made this issue an election issue and it stood true to its commitment during the election. They carried out their responsibilities well.

To those members of the government who regard that lengthy debate as futile, I can only say it served a very useful purpose in providing a safety valve for the views of a rather large minority of people in Quebec and elsewhere. Certainly, 75c and the implementation of closure at this time is not justified in light of that debate, not by any measure. If it is, then there is 75B. The Cr ditistes have given their support to 75B. What then is the use, purpose, motivation or reasoning behind

[Mr. Thompson.]

those who would force 75c on us at the present time? I believe that a wise government would gladly endure an occasional filibuster in a representative democracy such as we have, because such as government knows that the throttling of strongly held views leaves a residue of bitterness that can be dangerous.

It is for this reason I sympathize with you, Mr. Speaker, in the responsibilities that will be yours during the rest of this parliament. This is not going to be as pleasant a job as in the past, in spite of those occasional problems you have had with some of us. It is not only the opposition which feels this way. It seems to me that the government ought to be a little sensitive to public opinion. A majority of newspapers across this country have expressed opinions in relation to the views I have expressed. Let me read a short quotation from a recent article in the *Ottawa Citizen*. I do not always quote the *Ottawa Citizen* because it is not often regarded as a Conservative newspaper. I quoted it last night because it had something profound and relevant to say about another issue. I quote it again tonight for that same reason.

On July 4, this editorial appeared which reads:

It is no accident that the government decided to wait until the dying hours of the present session to introduce its new closure rule—and that is what rule 75c is.

The editorial then continues:

No parliamentarians can become as intractable, as unwilling to compromise, as those who are tired, who want to go home, but can't because they feel put upon and must stay to do battle. Much of the good work accomplished in gaining opposition co-operation to speed the work of parliament may be undone if the government keeps to its course.

I have thought that the Prime Minister and the Liberal party have tried to be sensitive to the views of students. They have watched and listened to the youth of this country, yet on July 18 I noticed a news report which stated:

The University of Ottawa Students' Union has challenged Prime Minister Trudeau and any one of his cabinet ministers to a public debate on controversial Rule 75, which would limit debate in the House of Commons.

In a letter delivered to the Prime Minister's office Thursday students council president Allan Rock decries the "apathy" of the public over the debate-limiting measure.

Resolution of the debate, if the Prime Minister accepts, would be "resolved that no government has the right to arbitrarily limit debate in our nation's parliament."

The students council has also mounted a country-wide campaign to collect signatures on a petition protesting the proposed rule change.