

*The Address—Mr. Churchill*

this side. I had hopefully expected that Liberal party members, led by the Prime Minister, might pay respect to the development of our parliamentary system and encourage young people of this country to show the veneration that this institution deserves.

Unfortunately that has not been done. We have reached the stage where for the first time, I believe, in the speech from the throne a reference has been made to the internal management of this place. I wondered, when listening to the speech, why the internal management of the business of the house should be mentioned. Surely that is for the members of this house to deal with.

Then on the first day of the session the Prime Minister asked for and received unanimous consent to re-establish the committee on rules and procedures. That again was most unusual. He dwelt at some length, when speaking two or three days ago, on the necessity for modifying rules and procedures of this chamber. The Minister of National Health and Welfare, who has been appointed government house leader, in his turn has been discussing outside the house what he thinks ought to be done, as he put it, to streamline the procedures of this chamber.

Changing the rules and streamlining procedure apparently is one of the matters uppermost in the mind of the government, and across this country the impression has been created that something is seriously wrong with parliament. Editorial writers take a hint from the Prime Minister and the cabinet and write articles about how matters ought to be conducted differently and how the house business ought to be speeded up.

When editorial writers write of unnecessary delays and length of debates they miss entirely something of fundamental importance; that is, the preservation of freedom which rests with this institution. We have here an alarming situation. Gradually, in a typically Liberal way, this institution is being hamstrung by restrictions. Over the years we have changed the rules substantially, and in most of the changes I have concurred. Nevertheless, restrictions limiting the time for discussion have been imposed; the length of time members may speak has been reduced. A number of restrictions have been introduced within the last ten years most of them, unfortunately, restricting the time in which private members may speak.

Matters have now reached the stage where the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) suggested further limitations

yesterday. He said that the speech from the throne ought to be reduced to a three day debate. That would mean that only 30 members of this house would be able to speak. Of those 30 members how many would be back-benchers? About half only, I suggest.

He suggested that the budget debate be reduced to three days, once again placing a limitation on the private members of the house; because the cabinet ministers, the front benchers on this side of the house, and the leaders of the various parties, small or large, would be the ones who would participate in the debate. Once again he was suggesting that the private member be restricted.

● (11:50 a.m.)

Government ministers view the private members of this house with indifference. They are like the Gadarene swine, dashing down the slope to destruction. Private members, if the government's intentions are carried out, will become mere puppets in this chamber, just rubberstamping things put in front of them. That is the situation that is facing us, and I think there should be a revolt on the part of the private members in this chamber.

**Mr. Allmand:** May I ask the hon. member a question?

**Mr. Churchill:** Yes.

**Mr. Allmand:** Has the hon. member studied the rules in Great Britain, where the budget debate is limited to three days and they have over 600 members?

**Mr. Churchill:** Yes, I have made a very careful study of parliamentary institutions and of the rules in the United Kingdom. They offset some of these restrictions by other methods. They have special debates more frequently on urgent matters of importance, debates which we cannot have here. If the opposition in the British House of Commons asks for an immediate debate on the subject of Viet Nam, Rhodesia or West Africa, it is granted. How do you get an immediate debate in this house? You don't. It is a rare thing to have a request like that granted here. We have to wait for a supply motion or something else. Consequently, unless the system is changed we have to rely on these general debates such as the speech from the throne or the budget debate. That is why interim supply has been misused by both major parties when in opposition because the opportunity is not provided for immediate discussion of some matter of great public importance.