

Procedure and Organization

Government supporters represent the minority of the people of Canada.

That is the position we are in at the present time. Although the government has a comfortable majority in the house, it represents a minority only of the Canadian people. I do not say that to be belligerent or to depreciate the government's electoral victory. I say that because I hope the government will listen to my plea. I plead with the government to pause and to consider what it is doing. They should realize that they have no divine right to govern.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacLean: We heard a great deal about the allocation of time. I have heard it said that we should follow the example of the Mother of Parliaments. That is the example we are admonished to follow. The trouble is that our two situations are not comparable. In many cases comparisons are not valid. The rules under which the U.K. parliament works in many cases have been misinterpreted. There are many reasons, of course, for allocating time, one of them being that there is an increase in government business. Also, the allocation of time idea is attractive to governments because they put through much second grade legislation. Since I have been a member I have seen governments introduce legislation which they have told the people of this country was the paragon of all virtues and must not be changed. Having refused to accept all opposition amendments, the government has been forced, sometimes one year after the original enactment, to bring the measure before the house again to have it amended. Parliament has had to go through the entire process of considering the matter again.

The notion of limitation of time is likely to appeal to those members, and they are mostly new members, who because of inexperience do not know just what parliament is all about. They are not fully conscious, perhaps for four or five years, of the great trust they hold, for the Canadian people. They are custodians of our treasured rights and freedoms and it behooves them to follow in the great traditions of their predecessors who looked on themselves as the servants of the people.

I appreciate the many difficulties facing governments. Often when a government is elected it has among its supporters many inexperienced members who may misinterpret the significance of their election. They have the impression, mistakenly, that they

have been elected because their electors think they can do no wrong. Nothing is further from the truth. Having been a member of a government I realize, in retrospect, how difficult it was for a small group of 50 experienced parliamentarians to lead and set an example for 150 new members who had no experience of this game. And this process has been gone through several times in the past. As a result, many members do not realize why the rules of this house, which are based on tradition, are as they are.

Since the election of this government we have changed the rules drastically. The parties making up the opposition, and private members on both sides of the house, have forfeited vast numbers of rights which our predecessors enjoyed. For example, estimates are no longer considered in this chamber but are considered in committee. That is a tremendous concession on the part of the opposition, and it should give weeks of additional time for the government to bring forward government business.

Why does the government demand these new, extraordinary and arbitrary powers to limit debate? I am, of course, referring to the effect of proposed rule 75c. What legislation can the government possibly have in mind that requires this severe restriction on our freedom of speech? Why does the government need this gag? What legislation would a right thinking government wish to introduce that would require a rule like 75c to force it through? I have racked my brains about this, and I cannot imagine what the legislation could be. Of course, since the government this year permitted homosexuality under certain conditions it may wish next year to make it compulsory—that is about as far as my imagination extends. Seriously, Mr. Speaker, why does the government require this power?

My experience has always been that when an opposition debates for a long period any measure that the government has brought in, and sometimes such debates can go on for many weeks, the opposition has usually been right. Experience, time and again, has proved that in these cases the opposition has been right.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacLean: Therefore it should be an axiom that no government ought to introduce legislation that will need to be forced through the house by the application of a rule that limits the freedom of speech. Time has shown that the government's attitude in the pipe line