

Procedure and Organization

An hon. Member: Why don't you read his book?

Another hon. Member: Tell us about the little boy.

Mr. Allmand: You see, Mr. Speaker, I am touching the opposition's sensitive spot, because it will not allow me to speak.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Allmand: They want to shout me down. That is their concept of democracy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Allmand: Under our constitution, enshrined in the British North America Act that we cannot amend in this house, there is a provision that there must be elections every five years. We say that the majority has the right to put forward its legislative program. If it is bad legislation, if it is wrong in changing the rules, it shall answer to the people. It has that responsibility. If we are doing the wrong thing the opposition should be happy. After all, that will put them on this side of the house after the next election—but I doubt it. Our constitution guarantees that Canada, which is a federal state, shall have elections at least every five years. Therefore the accusations of dictatorship or autocracy are ridiculous.

It is strange to hear opposition members say that the opposition is badly treated and is not given enough debating time. Has anyone counted the pages in *Hansard* devoted to the speeches of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, the hon. member for Peace River and other opposition members? And we should consider not only debate but the question period and other procedures in this house. If we compare the number of pages devoted to opposition members with the number of pages on which we appear, then certainly it may be said that we on this side in the back benches are the slaves of the opposition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: Will the hon. member permit a question. Will he tell me at what point the house leaders of the opposition parties will be reduced to the status of backbenchers on the government side of the house?

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, I expect more sensible questions from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Monteith: That is a typical approach.

Mr. Allmand: Why do we require time limits in this modern age, Mr. Speaker? Would anyone belonging to a club, trade union, corporation, or private association tolerate a situation in which a minority of people at a meeting could prevent the taking of a decision indefinitely? Would opposition party members at one of their political conventions tolerate a situation in which a minority group could block the taking of an important decision? Just look at political party conventions. They are conducted under time limits, and that is reasonable. The opposition has a double standard, supporting the idea of time allocation when it suits it at their conventions and similar party functions, and opposing it here, simply because it is the opposition.

An hon. Member: Is that the case for the defence?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): There is no need to impose time limitations on a party that has nothing to say.

Mr. Lewis: I shall think of a retort to that quip by tomorrow.

Mr. Allmand: Some hon. members are trying to give the country the impression that the idea of time allocation on debate is new and that we are trying to foist something on the parliament of Canada. I think it is time the Canadian public were made aware of a few facts. There are many instances in our rules in which time limitation is permissible.

Mr. Bell: By agreement.

Mr. Allmand: It is not always by agreement. The time limitations have been brought in over the years because legislation has become more voluminous and complex. First of all, we have a six day limitation on the budget debate.

Some hon. Members: By agreement.

Mr. Allmand: And an eight day limitation on the Throne Speech debate.

Some hon. Members: By agreement.