

*Procedure and Organization*

It would be possible for major legislation to receive only cursory examination, and entire legislation could be passed through parliament before the Canadian public had any opportunity to express its opinions. In fact, a major piece of legislation could, if the government so desired, receive less than 10 hours of actual debate in the House of Commons, and this would include every phase of a bill.

We could see an unscrupulous government, with the use of 75c, start second reading on a major piece of legislation, perhaps on a Wednesday, when the House of Commons sits only four hours. As usual debate would start after the question period, and in three hours or less the debate on the principle of the bill would be over, with only a handful of members having participated. Surely rules allowing such obvious abuse of our parliamentary democracy will never be enacted by our Canadian parliament. Surely the members on the government benches will never allow rules of this nature to become law.

● (5:10 p.m.)

Once through second reading, the bill in one day could be forced through the committee to which it had been referred, again without full discussion. It would then come back to the House of Commons where another three or four hour debate could take care of proposed amendments and other criticism, and at the end of the day this stage of the bill would be completed, regardless of what remained to be discussed.

The third and final reading of any bill could again be completed in one day, and could be a repetition of the above, with only a three or four hour debate. A total of ten hours or less in the House of Commons could see major legislation ready for the Senate and royal assent. I say again that regardless of the good intention of any party it will be a major political and democratic blunder if the members of this house ever make this proposed rule change legal.

Rule 75c is a dangerous, a vicious and a foolish proposal. It strikes at the very roots of democracy. It gives the ruling party the legal power to effectively gag those who oppose its policies. It could only be the creation of a party which has become contemptuous of both our democratic parliamentary tradition and of the general public. It is another example of the political blundering and inept manoeuvring of the Trudeau administration. It shows how thoroughly Liberal backbenchers have been whipped into line, for none of them dare to raise their voices in protest. If

this is a part of the Liberal plan for a just society then our nation is in real trouble. If this Liberal administration needs the type of rule change as proposed in 75c to govern this nation, then one is justified in asking what type of legislation does it have in mind for the future which would require the use of such restrictive measures?

The minister talks about the committee report which was brought in by the chairman, the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Blair). Let me put on the record the composition of the committee so that no one will get the idea that 75c was part of any joint report in which other parties participated. The procedure committee is proposed of 12 members. There are 7 Liberals, 3 Conservatives, 1 N.D.P. and 1 Creditiste. The Liberals have a clear majority in the committee. The only members of the committee voting for 75c were Liberals. All the other members were opposed.

To put the whole problem of parliamentary procedure in its proper perspective I feel that a short review of our efforts in this field is necessary. Again I am going to take us back to the fall of 1968 when the first session of this Parliament started.

All parties agreed that some major changes had to be made. An all party committee was set up and a report was brought in. Over 95 per cent of that lengthy report was adopted by the House of Commons. Only one section was rejected, and that was the infamous 16A which is somewhat similar to the measure we are debating today. These major rule changes received the full support of all the members of the house. The opposition parties helped to draft them, and we tried to make them work. We have streamlined much of our parliamentary procedure. We have already drastically reduced the debating time spent on legislation in this chamber. However, we cannot agree to accept the changes suggested by 75c, and no democratic government should insist on proceeding with these changes when they are so unanimously and vigorously opposed by members of all the opposition parties in the house.

We are told by the government that 75c is needed in order that parliament can respond quickly to an emergency situation. This is a complete farce. A closure rule is already on the books and it has been there for over 50 years. We have also heard from the Liberal members that legislation was unduly held up during this current session. Again there is no