

Procedure and Organization

him down, we have always accepted to cooperate. On the other hand, every time he has tried to impose his own views on us without seeking our advice, we have always refused our co-operation, because as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said, we refuse, under the pretext of modernizing the rules of the House of Commons, to be pushed around. We readily accept modernization but we want to truly and fully participate in it.

Mr. Speaker, members of the Ralliement Cr ditiste will not allow those members who never take part in the business of the house to blame us for extending our debates unnecessarily. This is nonsense and it should cause the President of the Privy Council and his colleagues to ponder and urge the opposition members to be a little more brief in order not to delay our proceedings too much. But at the same time, he should see to it that his own people participate more in our discussions so that parliament would not only for the opposition but also for government members who do not speak too often.

This is why we believe, Mr. Speaker, that there would be an advantage at this moment, even if we support section 75A and 75B, in withdrawing section 75c and in referring the whole thing to the committee for a deeper and more serious study. The very definition of the Canadian parliament, of the meaning of a debate, of the role of a member, whether of the government or of the opposition, is at stake, and I think the question should be of interest to all hon. members.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleagues for their patience and to ask those who are most experienced to express their views in order to preserve the rights of this parliament. I would also ask them to set an example to the younger members in order to prove to them that this parliament still mean something in 1969, because even if it is modernized, one must still respect the right of every member to speak.

[English]

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, as a number of hon. members have already suggested, the committee which has considered and produced the recommended rules spent a fair amount of its time since Christmas trying to arrive at some kind of compromise between the position taken by hon. members on the other side and the position taken by the government. I think it is fitting that this difference in point of view is expressed in the

[Mr. Fortin.]

amendment put forward. That is the real controversy that has been before the committee and in fact before the house for most of this session, namely, the point of view taken by the opposition that the majority of the members should not in the long run have the opportunity of determining how the time of the house is to be utilized.

As hon. members have already mentioned, principally in seven sittings of the committee the question of time allocation was discussed. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), in one of his lyrical moments, suggested that everything was going swimmingly and there was no hint of difficulty or controversy until we got down to the last two meetings. I think the hon. member will agree he was being lyrical. At all times it was made perfectly clear on behalf of the majority of members of the house, and my colleagues on the committee made it perfectly clear they considered that this and all other questions in the house were to be decided by the majority of voices, including the decision of programming.

The committee devoted itself to arriving at some kind of compromise to find means whereby the rights of the minority to express their viewpoint in opposition to a particular bill could be made available and at the same time so that ultimately a decision could be taken on all of the measures put before parliament. This is the basic question, and apparently this basic question still remains to be decided in the house and between the various parties in the house.

I will not spend any time describing in detail 75A and 75B. The proposed rule 75A really makes formal what has been an informal practice of the house, that is to say, by general agreement of the representatives of the parties a decision is made as to how time is to be allocated. The advantage that 75A offers which has not hitherto been available under our rules is that it will make it possible for the representatives of the parties to agree on an appropriate order. We will not be in the situation we have sometimes found ourselves in where one or two members can prevent the vast majority of members of the house from arriving at a decision as to how the time is to be allocated at the various stages of a bill.

As has already been indicated, under rule 75B there is a different procedure, recognizing the fact that there is a dissent. One of the opposition parties may well dissent to the proposal put forward. One stage of the bill is