

Procedure and Organization

very difficult under modern circumstances. We are faced with a vast volume of public business which must be done not only in this assembly but in the provincial assemblies across the country. The two concepts must always be mutually compatible.

One aspect of the present need for reform can be illustrated by examining the vast increase in public spending since the turn of the century. Today we, as Members of Parliament, are being asked to authorize the spending of moneys in the order of \$13 billion a year. That is a vast increase over the budget of 1899-1900. The total budget at that time was \$46,286,550. That is a 28,000 per cent increase since the turn of the century.

We all know that we live in a new Canada with new and pressing problems, yet there remains the basic and fundamental question of how we compress into the same 365-day year more business, more subjects, and more issues. The question remains how we can sensibly and logically allocate the vast amounts of money which have been placed at the disposal of the government by the Canadian people?

Obviously we need changes to accommodate these facts of modern day life. Some of us have served in opposition. It is a worthwhile experience. Indeed, if we all stay here long enough we will all be in that spot some day. Those of us who have served in opposition have every respect for the role of the opposition in this house. In many ways it occupies a position as important as government. Every day we are reminded of this fact by political science texts.

One of the opposition members has spoken eloquently in this debate. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has made a number of speeches before non-political forums. In 1964 this acknowledged parliamentarian, speaking at a summer conference in Ontario, said:

If you are on the opposition side, you usually contend for freedom of speech; if you are on the government side, you contend for arrangements to get the business done.

I must admit the hon. member did not make this statement in the House of Commons but at the Couchiching Conference. I continue with the quotation:

The amount of business is increasing so much that I think . . . that we have to think more in terms of getting things done, and I think that this can be done without interfering with freedom of speech.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

[Mr. Perrault.]

Mr. Perrault: This is what the hon. member said. As we all know, he is perfectly right. I repeat the words he said on that occasion:

The amount of business is increasing so much that I think even as an opposition member that we have to think more in terms of getting things done, and I think it is possible for us to do this without interfering with freedom of speech.

Again, I turn to this opposition source, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, who has considerable experience in this house and a great and deserved reputation. He was not speaking in the house but was speaking candidly and frankly to a summer academic forum in that same year. He stated:

Parliamentarians start with a notion that freedom of speech somehow means freedom to talk forever. Cutting off debate is felt to be a denial of a basic, democratic right. But the fact is that we do this in many ways in Parliament. The 40-minute limit or the 30-minute limit or the 20-minute rule that we have are denials of unlimited free speech—

He continued:

Although years ago there were no time limits on any debates, we did, in 1955 impose a limit of a certain number of days on the debate on the address, the debate on the budget, and on debates on supply motions. When the point is reached when these debates must end, nobody ever says that free speech is ended.

This is what a spokesman for the New Democratic Party said on that occasion. I am sure he remembers this address because it was a good speech. He also said:

We accept the proposition that it is good to organize such things.

I am sure the hon. member feels the same way today and that his sentiments have not changed. But there is a difference; in this debate he has been far more vehement in his belief that all party agreement must be obtained in the matter of allocating time. This is what he has been emphasizing during this debate. Significantly, however, he admits that implicit in rule 75B, the rule which would permit house business to move along with the assent of three parties in this house, is the belief that the government party should be one of the three. This is an acknowledgment of the fact that a majority, and not the minority, must ultimately assume the responsibility to move along the business of the house. I refuse to believe the hon. member would seriously contend that one or two parties in this house should be endowed with the power to frustrate the will of the people for any inordinate length of time. He cannot hold this belief and still subscribe to the principles of parliamentary democracy about which he