

Procedure and Organization

specified number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at that stage; provided that the time allotted for any stage is not to be less than one sitting day and provided that for the purposes of this standing order an allocation may be proposed in one motion to cover the proceedings at both the report and the third reading stages of a bill—

Really this proposal sets a minimum as well as a maximum time. It says that you can spend one day on second reading, one day in committee—and just imagine what would have happened if we had spent one day only in committee on the Criminal Code amendments—one day on the report stage when amendments have to be moved, and one day on the third reading stage. According to my mathematics it seems that we are to be allowed four days to debate a bill. Of course, the hon. member says, “But we can have a little hanky-panky; before the introduction of each stage we can have a two hour debate.” What a waste of time that will be. None of us is here to waste time. I think I speak for all intelligent members of parliament when I say that we are interested in debating the substance and principle of a bill. We are not interested in wasting time at the second reading stage, the committee stage, the report stage and the third reading stage by indulging in a two hour procedural wrangle. At every stage we are to have a two hour debate. Well, those of us in opposition are interested in getting to the substance of the bill. We want to get at the principle of a bill and let our people in this country know what the import and purport of the legislation is.

A few minutes ago the minister read briefly from the *Toronto Telegram*. I, too, wish to read from the *Toronto Telegram* of July 8, 1969. In my copy the author of this article, Mr. Lubor J. Zink, writes as follows:

With rule 75c in operation, they say, the Government would be in a position to arbitrarily limit the debate of any controversial Bill to three days and thereby make it impossible for the opposition to alert the public to potentially detrimental measures.

It is this danger and not the principle of allocation of time for debate the opposition is determined to fight resolutely. For unless the opposition parties manage to hold on to the weapon of prolonged debate when they see danger to the nation in some specific legislation or policy proposal, the Government will be in a position to enforce its will before the public grasps the issues involved.

What is parliament all about, Mr. Speaker? I know my friends of the Liberal party will not be influenced by what I and others in the opposition have to say. The only time the

government changes its position is when the opposition brings something to the attention of public opinion. Only when public opinion has been made fully aware of something does the government back off and amend legislation. That is what the opposition does and that, in part, is what parliament is about. I know that when hon. members opposite come out of caucus, they are brainwashed and trained seals; but they are nevertheless sensitive. Oh, yes, they are sensitive because they love power, as the Prime Minister so aptly said before he became a Liberal. They love power so much that they have been forced to respond to public opinion in western Canada. The Prime Minister is to make a trip out west to try to calm the fears of our farmers.

An hon. Member: He does not know when he is going.

Mr. Woolliams: That is right. He does not know when he is to go; but the very fact that he is going indicates that he is sensitive to public opinion. He is also sensitive to the pin pricks of his backbenchers who say to him in caucus, “You’ve got to do something, Pierre; we are going to be defeated next time round.”

Mr. Perrault: That is arrant nonsense.

Mr. Woolliams: I hear the mountain of British Columbia rumbling. I always call the hon. member Rip Van Winkle because he rumbles like a mountain. You can always tell when he comes into the house. The Prime Minister should know who he is, this hon. member who comes from the mountains. I continue quoting from Mr. Zink’s article:

This danger is acute despite the marvels of instant communications. For while three days of debate may be sufficient for raising most of the arguments the opposition wishes to make in the Commons, they are woefully inadequate for making an impression on the public mind.

He continues:

There is no objection to limitation of debating time by agreement as stipulated in the proposed rules 75A and 75B, but the opposition parties cannot swallow the arbitrariness of Rule 75c. It is their duty to block the dictatorial measure until the Government either rams it through by invoking the standing closure rule or removes the unacceptable part of the package as it did before Christmas.

Is it not a coincidence, Mr. Speaker, that every time we are about to adjourn for a holiday the government brings in a proposal to change the rules. Just before Christmas they brought in the proposal for rule 16A and now, just before we are to rise for the summer, they bring in proposed Standing Order