

Debating Time Allotment

an expert on the rules, but as a backbencher who has seen two elections since taking his place in this chamber. Although I do not intend to go into all the technicalities of the rules, I do wish to bring out a few points which, so far, have not been brought to Your Honour's attention.

In the parliament elected before the present parliament, the 27th Parliament of Canada, we heard a great deal about the way in which the air of democracy had been polluted by the battles of the past. Regardless of partisan differences on questions of policy, especially at election time, we are all Members of Parliament. I read about hon. members opposite going into a seance at weekends with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and other members of the Privy Council to hold their lovefest or love-in. They came out saying: Now the Prime Minister is on our side; the cabinet understands us. Yet, within a week or so they are confronted with an action of this kind on the part of the government, and participatory politics becomes just a sham.

If parliament is hamstrung, every member on the back benches is silenced, no matter on which side of the house he is sitting. Members opposite attend their lovely soirées at the weekends—I am a little jealous, I suppose—and leave feeling that their point of view has been accepted—only to find themselves confronted with a proposal such as this, one which will profoundly affect the workings of parliament. We were told that parliament would recess on June 27. How misleading this has proved to be. I was a member of the former parliament when, as has been said, the atmosphere was polluted. I well remember speaking during tense moments in the early days of the 27th Parliament. Has a lesson been learned? In the first year of the 28th Parliament, for no good reason which rules 75A and 75B would not take care of, the government has decided to ram rule 75C through the house. They may succeed eventually. I do not know. But I suggest to Your Honour and particularly to the 100 or so members who came here little more than a year ago looking for the new politics, participatory politics, that as a result the atmosphere will again be so polluted that the present parliament will encounter all the pitfalls and sandtraps which bedevilled previous parliaments.

To turn, now, to the point at issue. The committee system is under attack. We ask the question: Is it a charade or will the President

of the Privy Council be the puppeteer to pull the strings—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

● (9:20 p.m.)

Mr. Nowlan: I am sorry the President of the Privy Council does not share the enthusiasm and idealism of the hon. member for York South. Neither has he accepted the advice of some of the veterans on this side who have suggested that the fact our parliamentary committee system does not work is the responsibility of cabinet. If that is true, then let the cabinet inform members of all parties of this house that the committee system is a charade.

The present situation is the last straw. I should like to refer to reports submitted by three committees, of two of which I have been a member. The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) knows more about the fifth report of the transportation committee than I do, but I would like to refer to the report on maritime transportation. While the committee was considering its report, the minister brought into this house the transportation bill without reference to the committee's report.

Then again, the Minister of National Defence, (Mr. Cadieux) honourable gentleman that he is, said that no decision would be made on defence policy until the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence had made its report. The committee went to Europe and had a very informative and illuminating tour, but I am not so naïve as to believe that basic decisions on NATO and/or NORAD and/or maritime command were not made before the committee submitted its report.

Then tonight, the Minister of Agriculture, (Mr. Olson) who knows something about the rules, certainly more than I—though he did not display that knowledge this evening—set up a straw man. In view of all the wheat that still remains for him to sell, I do not think he should compound the problem by adding all the straw he built up tonight, to say nothing of some of the beef that he was distributing. Certainly, his performance was not a fair reflection of his knowledge of the rules. The hon. gentleman knows that the report presented by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Blair) was not one that he composed himself, having sat and considered the matter for some months entirely on his own. The house gave the committee an instruction to bring in a report.