

Procedure and Organization

whether this in itself is not an indication that the amendment cannot be accepted on the basis of relevancy.

In the course of the procedural debate hon. members mentioned the fact that we are dealing with an amendment which is limited in scope in that it suggests that the report be referred back to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization with instructions to amend it by deleting therefrom proposed Standing Order 75c. It seems to me that the amendment which the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra proposed to the house this morning does go beyond the scope of this very limited amendment. In my view and in my interpretation of the subamendment, it seeks to do many other things, one of them being to correct proposed standing order 75B. Because of that I have very serious reservations about the procedural acceptability of the subamendment.

Hon. members know that the role of the Chair essentially is to see that discussion is relevant to the matter before the house and that amendments be relevant to the questions before the house. If the Speaker has a role to perform that is particularly significant, it is precisely to see that the rule of relevancy, to some extent at least, is respected. It is not all that easy to ensure that it is respected in the course of debate. It is not easy either to see that it is accepted and respected in connection with amendments proposed by hon. members.

After much serious thought I have come to the conclusion that the subamendment proposed by the hon. member enlarges the scope of the amendment which, as I said, is limited in nature being restricted exclusively to a reconsideration of proposed Standing Order 75c. I indicated before one o'clock, and I reiterate now, that perhaps the method by which the proposition advanced by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra might be considered by the house is in the form of an amendment to the main motion. I cannot rule in anticipation but it would appear to me to be the reasonable way in which to consider the hon. member's amendment.

For this reason and in the hope that we can ensure respect for and acceptance by all hon. members of the rule of relevancy, I suggest that the subamendment be not considered now and that we proceed for the time being with the consideration of the amendment itself.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, may I say that I feel the discussion today, the question period this morning

and the incident of the lack of a quorum yesterday afternoon are direct consequences of the introduction of and insistence by the government on this type of amendment which tries to ram closure—I do not know what else to call it since it is closure—down our throats when the house will not accept that. It must be remembered, and I have indicated this before on previous occasions when we were speaking on points of order, that the rules of the house are the rules by general acceptance of the house. They are no more the prerogative of the government than they are the prerogative of the Chair. The Chair does not make the rules. Neither are they the prerogative of the opposition.

Why this government at the present time should feel that they have become the anointed to impose their version of the rules and the version of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) on the house is not obvious to anyone. If some of the new members would look back on the traditions and customs of this house they would see that June 25, 1968, was not the date of the second coming of Christ and was not the dawning of a new parliamentary system. It was a continuation of our parliamentary system of government.

• (2:10 p.m.)

Prior to my coming to the house in 1957 many rule changes were made. The hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch) was in the house at that time and so was the hon. member for LaSalle (Mr. Lessard). The hon. member for LaSalle will agree that the changes made in 1954-55 received the consensus of the house. Lest some of the neophytes think that many of the changes brought in then were not of a major nature, let them refer to the committee report and to *Votes and Proceedings*, of the day when they will discover that that was the time when limitations were first imposed on the debate on the speech from the throne and the debate on the budget. Other limitations were also imposed which were for the benefit of the executive.

Mr. Winch: And by agreement.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Yes, by agreement. Subsequently other changes were brought in during the 1960-61 administration which modified our daily proceedings.

Mr. Goyer: What about the debate on the flag?

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): What about the debate on the defence production bill and on the trans-Canada pipe line?