

Procedure and Organization

they should have taken advantage of the opportunity to express their views.

In any event, why should there be such haste all of a sudden? When parliament is dealing with moral questions such as abortion, homosexuality or gambling, or with income tax matters which will be around in one form or another in years to come, what difference does it make whether a debate takes three days or five days? Really, there is none at all except that some members on the government side are anxious to get things done, or to get measures passed so that they can build up their image. As one old fellow is supposed to have said when he saw people hurrying to get things done in a rush: Why the hurry; it will all be the same in a hundred years? It will not make much difference in the end if a debate takes five days or six days or seven days, especially if it provides an opportunity for someone from some part of the country to express a viewpoint which he believes to be important. I know this is annoying to people from the Montreal and Toronto areas. They do not particularly want to hear from people outside those areas. I know. I see those members laughing and scratching over there. That shows the regard they have for this house.

We might ask ourselves exactly why the government has seen fit to bring in the present motion at this time. The question has been asked by other hon. members and I do not wish to be repetitious. Why was it thought necessary? Under Standing Order 33 they have power to institute closure if there is unnecessary obstruction. In my view there has been pretty good co-operation from this side of the house in getting things arranged with regard to the government's program, whatever that may be. The only reason I can think of is that there must be a genuine desire on the part of the government to emasculate parliament. I do not think the triumvirate which runs this country—I mean the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier)—

Mr. Dinsdale: The troika.

Mr. Nesbitt:—and the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand), to judge from their writings and speeches, have any great regard for the parliamentary system of government.

They appear to have a much greater regard for the presidential system, either that of

France or of the United States, whose system derives from that of France. It is a matter of viewpoint. It might be that the presidential system is the better one. I do not happen to think so, but it is a legitimate point of view. I can understand why those three gentlemen, who are of French cultural background, would prefer it. After all, the parliamentary system of Canada is an Anglo-Saxon institution and it has never worked very well in areas of French culture—in France, for example. Perhaps this is why they would be in favour of changing to a presidential system of the kind established in the United States. But in that case, why not tell us so and let the matter be debated openly?

The Anglo-Saxon parliamentary system operates on a pragmatic, ad hoc basis. Of course it does. It is intended to deal with human beings, not to run in accordance with strict rules or with computerlike precision. I can understand rule 75c being put forward by the leader of the house; it is the kind of rule which would fit into an application of the presidential theory. Everything must fit into its little slot. The government must be able to tell how long everything will take—half an hour for this, an hour for that, and so on. It is just the kind of thing which would fit into a cabinet system of government. I think it should be made clear to us whether this is what is being sought to be done. I think, on the other hand, one can assume that it is not part of an over-all plan that the triumvirate wishes to impose upon Canada. Perhaps one can express the less charitable view that the house leader is plain greedy for power. I would not want to think that for one moment, of course, but that view has been expressed by others.

● (5:50 p.m.)

What makes me curious about this is that the house leader has suggested that rule 75c is necessary, though it may only be brought into use in about one per cent of the cases, in order to arrange the government program. If that is the case, it would not be needed very often. This makes me very suspicious. Perhaps one should not be suspicious, but in view of what has been happening in the house during the first session of this new parliament one cannot help but be suspicious.

The remainder of my remarks will be devoted to some of the reasons why I think members on this side of the house, regardless of to which opposition party they belong,