

*Procedure and Organization*

chairman, or whoever was in charge of a particular debate. I say we should ask Mr. Speaker to enforce this rule in our own best interests. If this were done we would be required to learn our subjects better, to get them clear in our minds, to work out a logical sequence in the delivery of our ideas, and to make a brief rather than a wordy presentation. This would have a greater impact on the ministers concerned and on members of the Press Gallery. This latter point is important, because if our speeches are not reported to the public they really might as well not be made. So I say that in order to make our debates far more effective, in order to obtain far better coverage in the press, we should adopt the suggestion I am putting forward.

At present we often make our speeches so dull, so poor and so mixed up that members of the press cannot figure out what we are trying to get at. Nor do we give ourselves as good a chance to persuade members of the government to make the changes we believe are needed to improve legislation and consequently conditions in the country generally. It is only when our speeches are reported to the nation that public opinion is influenced by our views. Then in turn, through reports and editorials in the newspapers, the government, if it is not influenced by our presentations on the floor of the house, can be influenced by what appears in the newspapers or by what is said in the news media generally, as feedback develops following editorial comments and column features.

These are the three suggestions I make. I believe we should allow ministers to read quotations or statistical material. This, of course, is necessary. If the rule to which I have referred were strictly enforced, speeches would be briefer and far better. As we know, many speeches are now read in their entirety much to the boredom of the house. Far more attention would be paid to them by members of the government and members of the press if they were delivered without notes, or with the aid of very brief notes.

Speaking as a former minister I know that it is only when a man stands up and speaks with conviction and clarity that one begins to take note that he is calling attention to matters to which attention ought to be paid. I also know, having for many years talked to members of the Press Gallery that they are only impressed when they believe a man really understands his subject and speaks with conviction. It is only then that they pay attention to what he says and report it.

If we were to adopt these three changes I believe we could cut the time required to deal with legislation and other matters to about one third of what is spent today. In addition to accelerating the processes of parliament I believe we would make this house a far more effective place. Our speeches would be easier to listen to and carry more weight with Ministers of the Crown; they would be far more likely to influence debate than they are today. I therefore strongly urge all members to give consideration to these suggestions on measures we can take to help ourselves to run our own affairs better.

I come, now, to this question: if it is the desire of the government, as we are told it is, to speed up the processes of parliament, why has there been no inclination on the part of the government to move in the direction I have indicated? I have mentioned three things which could have been done long ago to improve the effectiveness of parliament. Yet the government has shown no interest in making any of these changes. Instead, it seeks to introduce a change which would completely nullify the effectiveness of the opposition in dealing with a majority government.

The answer is that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is not interested in accelerating the processes of parliament. He wants to control parliament. He is far more interested in controlling and in programming parliament than in speeding up parliament. He wishes to treat parliament as he treated his classroom when he was a teacher. I know the Prime Minister would like to play the role of a little colonel in parliament; he would like to crack the whip and have parliament jump to attention. He would like to know that on a certain date certain things would be accomplished, just as he would announce a lecture for a certain time and date, or say that on another date an examination would be held and that everything had to be cleared up in accordance with a timetable set out in advance. He sees parliament operating as an assembly line or as a computer, legislation being fed in at one end and laws coming out at the other in a certain form, that form being the way in which the government wants them to come out, irrespective of the views of the opposition.

The Prime Minister seems to think that he can operate in parliament by utilizing methods which dictators have developed to a very high degree. He does not want any opposition in parliament. He simply wants to squeeze it and have it jump. He wants to call the tune and have us dance to that tune. That is not the way to run a modern parliament.