

*Procedure and Organization*

This is a point which the government has been making in this debate. Of course the time of parliament and the money of the Canadian people have been wasted by an inordinately long debate on certain matters. That former government complained, and this government is taking action.

Changes are being sponsored by a government with a sense of responsibility. The former prime minister said:

I say that nowhere else in any other parliamentary institution is so much time taken in the examination of particular items as is taken here in connection with estimates.

He was right of course, but absolutely nothing was done to correct this abuse.

• (12 noon)

This government, criticized and villified by the opposition, is prepared to act and will act on the basis of suggestions articulated by the right hon. gentleman long ago. Time does not permit me to go through all the other examples about which the opposition parties have complained, but spokesmen for all parties have said insufficient time is being given to the consideration of estimates, and that speeches are too long. This government has acted. We simply say that those of us on the government side have been asking for co-operation. Some of you may say you have co-operated and 75c is not needed. We have been co-architects of many reforms which have taken place in this house but leadership has been given by this government.

Given reasonable co-operation by the opposition 75c may never be required. Who will question the right of the government to exercise power, when no agreement can be reached under 75A and 75B, to set in motion a procedure which would allow it to limit debate? To repeat those words of the former distinguished justice minister for the party to my left:

In the unusual circumstance where it is not possible to obtain agreement, the government itself takes responsibility for—and there is a vote upon—a motion for allocation of time on the matter in question.

In other Commonwealth jurisdictions, those nations which cherish zealously the tradition which we have inherited in Canada, the gullotine, closure and other devices are employed to limit debate. These are devices employed without any protestations and without any motions from the opposition.

If it can be demonstrated that 75c allows insufficient time, then let more time be

allowed, but the right and responsibility of this or any other government to invoke 75c or equivalent rules cannot be challenged successfully. Surely the members in opposition, in view of the statements of their former leaders and spokesman, will at least test 75c. Let them give this package a trial.

The minority right to dissent must never be jeopardized, but it is true that in the ultimate the wishes of the majority must prevail. Nowhere in this package of 75A, 75B and 75C is this principle violated or placed in jeopardy.

Some have alleged that closure is sufficient and that there is no need for 75c, yet closure permits a minister unilaterally to stifle all debate. Rule 75c only imposes the obligation for advance consultation with the opposition under 75A and 75B. In virtually all cases 75A and 75B would be sufficient, and 75c would be employed only when the majority opinion of the nation, represented by a majority of members in the house, supported action on a matter of importance to the country.

Rule 75c as it is, or modified to provide greater time for consideration and debate, will be a safeguard. I do not oppose this concept at all, or the idea of giving the opposition more time under 75c, so long as the principle remains that the government must have the right to schedule the work of the house when it comes down to the crunch. That is a right which must be observed.

Rule 75c as it is or modified will be that safeguard and a symbol of the determination of the majority of Canadians, after fair debate and after opposition members have had their opinions heard, that the government be able to proceed through a democratic vote in this house and get on with the people's business.

Speaker after speaker has made reference to the fact that this has been one of the most productive sessions in the history of this parliament. Members of the opposition parties have admitted the government has been successful, and have suggested that we do not need 75c because this has been one of the most productive parliaments we can recall. The only dissenting voice was from a member of the N.D.P. who said that so far as his party was concerned there has not been any legislation good enough to block or oppose. One wonders what their qualitative standards might be.

The rule changes made earlier in the session have strengthened the Commons without doubt, and they have made this institution