

Procedure and Organization

Pickersgill, Martin and Chevrier—from 1957 to 1962 when they kept this house in a constant wrangle for weeks on end on constitutional and procedural matters, I say that this government has been very fortunate in the kind of co-operation it has received from this side of the house.

The President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) in his speech yesterday complained that if the debates during this session had been shorter we would have been able to deal with some additional legislation. Let me ask two questions. First, let me ask which debates he thinks were too long. There were only two lengthy debates. The first was the debate on the omnibus bill amending the Criminal Code. Of course that took time. It was a very large bill. I for one supported all the provisions of that bill except the provision for a national lottery. But I respect the rights of those who were vigorously opposed to the clauses dealing with abortion and homosexuality. They were not arguing a political question. They were arguing a moral question, a matter of conscience, and nobody in this house has a right to curtail the views of any member who is trying to express his moral opposition and the moral opposition of his constituents to a proposed piece of legislation.

The other piece of legislation which took some time was the official languages bill. It also was an important piece of legislation which has far-reaching implications. Does anyone suggest it could have been curtailed? My complaint was that the government had not done a good enough job in explaining it to the public. I think that the fact it was a fairly lengthy debate helped to disabuse the public's mind and remove some of the fears existing in some parts of Canada in respect of the purport of that legislation, and other legislation that has resulted in extended debate.

● (4:00 p.m.)

The second thing I want to ask is, what legislation that the government wanted could not have been dealt with at this time? If the government had additional pieces of legislation it thought was important, the house could have continued on into July or reconvened after Labour Day. There is nothing sacrosanct about adjourning the house until October. There is no legislation the government really wants that could not be dealt with now. The government has had so much co-operation it has really had no problems. As a matter of fact, members on the government

side have been making speeches, according to press reports, indicating to their constituents how much fine legislation has been passed this session. The government members cannot have it both ways. They cannot boast about how much legislation has been passed and talk about obstruction by the opposition. The real fact is that the government does not have very much important legislation and is not being prevented from proceeding with anything it deems sufficiently important to place before parliament.

Another reason given for the need for rule 75c was put forward by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) on a television program I watched. He said that the rule change was necessary so that parliament could respond more quickly in order to meet changing social and economic needs in Canada. The truth is that it is the government which is failing to respond to the social and economic needs of Canada, not parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Parliament has been prepared for months to deal with some of the major problems facing this country. It is the government which does not know how to respond. Day after day in the house we have asked the government what it intends to do about rising prices. We asked for months about setting up the commission on incomes and prices. It has taken the government almost a year to get around to naming the personnel. We have talked about high interest rates and the government is still doing nothing. Only after a high degree of prodding was the matter finally sent to a standing committee of the house.

How did the government respond to the problem of housing in Canada? It did absolutely nothing until a minister of the Crown resigned in disgust and disappointment. Only then did it bring in a half-baked commitment that hardly deals with this problem. How has this government responded to the question of pollution?

Mr. Stanfield: It has created a lot.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Volumes of data are available about the terrible ravages of pollution in this country. Member after member on this side of the house has risen day after day to ask the government to take some steps, but there has been no action. It is not parliament that cannot respond quickly, it is the government which is completely ineffective, inefficient and unresponsive.