

*Procedure and Organization*

members, whatever their party, should have the privilege of making themselves heard on a controversial bill. I think it is a privilege that no party, no man will ever be able to take away from the house, without destroying Canadian parliamentaryism.

Mr. Speaker, what strikes me even more is this: If we replace the Liberals by the Conservatives and if the Conservatives brought forward this same standing order 75c we would see the best speakers of the Liberal party—such as the hon. member for Trois-Rivières (Mr. Mongrain) for instance—make telling speeches and say to the Conservative government that it is authoritarian, totalitarian and dictatorial, and that it is keeping Parliament under its heel. Then we would hear great speeches, by Liberal members, including the President of the Privy Council himself, and I think that he is fair enough to admit it. The Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Côté) who is smiling, would be the first one to stand up and blame the government for being authoritarian, autocratic and anything you want.

● (5:00 p.m.)

Today, these people are in power and they would like to do so. One wonders whether they are really serving the Canadian parliament and the Canadian people or whether they are as always serving the interests of only one man, the Prime Minister, who wants to rule everything. One can ask the question but I do not know what is the answer. However, they know it. Their conscience dictates it to them.

Mr. Speaker, one must not lose sight, of the fact during this debate which questions and jeopardizes the ability for each member, in particular for opposition members, to speak freely, that we are the spokesmen of the Canadian people, and that on that basis the quantity of the bills must necessarily give place to quality.

Let us come back to the main argument advanced by the President of the Privy Council who clearly stated, during consideration of standing order 16A and who said it again on many instances during the meetings of the committee on procedure and organization and again yesterday, during the consideration of the motion which he introduced, that the business of the house is lagging behind which results into a great loss of time. That is a fact, and everyone admits it. There is no argument about that Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the President of the Privy Council on that score; but that does

not mean that we should hurl ourselves at the other extreme to the extent of limiting the debate to one day for instance as standing order 75c stipulates.

Mr. Speaker, let us work it out: after the movers of the motion have spoken, as well as those who reply officially on behalf of each party, I can assure you that there is not much time left for those members who are known as the back-benchers. In other words, a very small minority, not even 1 per cent of the members, would be able to speak on standing order 75c. The other members would sit here to allow the government to either be overthrown or stay in power. We are not voting machines; we are here to participate.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I should like to remind you that the Canadian parliament, in my humble opinion, is an instrument put at the disposal of the representatives of the Canadian people to legislate; it gives every member the power to participate in the drawing up of legislation. I feel it would be an error on our part if we were to take away that right from the members.

Mr. Speaker, just one more thing before bringing my remarks to a close: any debate on any topic, always gives us the opportunity to throw light on every aspect of a question, and enables us to put it before the public. It also gives us the opportunity of expressing the public opinion in the House of Commons. It affords the public, as well as the members of every party, the opportunity to protest, to judge, to criticize, or to accept a proposal, as the case may be. It also gives the opportunity of delving more deeply into a subject, and to do some research. A debate can compel the members to think, to work and to prepare speeches. Lastly, it enables us to better understand the implications of a piece of legislation and maybe, if it is in the best interests of the Canadian people, to amend it.

If we limit debate according to the state of health or good will of a minister, whoever he may be, Mr. Speaker, then the sovereignty of parliament does not make any sense.

Several government members here are bringing up again the notorious matter of the omnibus bill. I would like then not to consider that matter as a refusal on our part to participate or to co-operate. It would be unfair of them, because they are aware, as well as president of the Privy Council that we did co-operate. In fact, many times he has sought the co-operation of the Ralliement Cr ditiste members, and we had never turned