

Procedure and Organization

the lobby curtains and then counts the result as a great tactical victory; or that which asks only to get on with the nation's business.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Trudeau: We have been told here, Mr. Speaker, that the government's view of parliament is wrong, that the possibility of endless debate is laudatory and that we are impatient and arrogant. Canadians are being told, in effect, that in the view of the opposition the world has stood still since 1867 and that the Canadian parliament should do the same.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: We do not accept that view, Mr. Speaker, nor do I suggest, do Canadians. At this point in time, with social structures in greater ferment than on any occasion in history, with scientific achievements of fantastic magnitude, with concepts and applications of concepts so complex and revealing as to stagger and refute previous economic and demographic truths, at this time in history legislative institutions which fail to reform themselves do so at peril of their own destruction.

[*Translation*]

What has this government done in this session of Parliament to lead the opposition to charge that we are guilty of emasculation, of garotting, of assassination, of all those colourful phrases that have been sprinkled through *Hansard* these past days? What indeed?

Here are some of the Parliamentary reforms which have been made this year.

First, we have participated fully, Mr. Speaker, in implementing the wise proposal that the office which you fill with such distinction be separated totally from party politics.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Trudeau: We have in addition provided, for the first time in the history of this country, large sums of money to the opposition parties to permit them to employ their own research staffs and so be better able to fulfill effectively their proper function of examining and considering government legislation, of pointing out weaknesses and proposing, if necessary, alternatives. But this is not all. This government has been the first to provide to the opposition adequate and regular opportunities to bring into this House matters of debate of

its own choice. The importance of this latter provision cannot be over-emphasized.

Hitherto, apart from supply motions which were generally concentrated in one or two short periods each session, the opposition has been able to control totally the topics discussed during debate on only two occasions: during the Throne Speech debate and during the debate following the presentation of the budget. In short, the opposition had had few opportunities in the past to choose the subject of debate.

For these reasons the rule changes introduced and passed by Parliament this year are outstanding achievements of which we are proud.

We are told that we are bent on muzzling the opposition, Mr. Speaker, but from now on, under the reforms which we have proposed to the house, of approximately 160 or 170 sitting days in a reasonable parliamentary year, 8 days are to be occupied by the debate on the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, 6 by the Budget debate, and an additional 28 are earmarked for the business of Supply and are allocated as opposition days, to be distributed throughout the sitting year so as to permit the opposition at frequent and regular intervals to challenge government policy on points of its own choosing. This means that 42 days in each session—approximately 25 per cent of the session—are days controlled by the opposition.

I think it proper to observe, Mr. Speaker, that in the current procedural debate, the opposition has chosen either not to mention at all, or to pass very lightly over the introduction of this important parliamentary safeguard. Far from fettering parliament, this government has moved further than any in the history of Canada to assure to the opposition regular and adequate opportunities to attack the government's record, and we have given them the means, Mr. Speaker.

Are these the acts of a government which is seeking to destroy parliament, to muzzle the opposition? Are these the acts of a government which has no respect for the principle of debate? To ask the question, Mr. Speaker, is to give the answer. To ask the question puts into proper perspective as well the accusations of the opposition in this debate. It serves to emphasize the contrasting attitudes to Parliament assumed by the opposition and the government. It illustrates for all Canadians just what little respect is shown for Parliament by an opposition making such exaggerated charges.