

Procedure and Organization

the government will again decide that this vicious rule 75c will be dropped.

The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton suggested that proposed rule 75c is greatly different from 16A. I did a bit of study on the subject this morning in preparation for what I thought would be another point of order, which was obviated when the President of the Privy Council changed the plans for us today. I would have liked to quote Mr. Speaker Lamoureux and give examples of things that seemed different but which were really alike. I suggest that the effects of 16A and proposed 75c are the same. They give the ultimate, dictatorial power to the government house leader to act even when the entire opposition disagrees with what the government is trying to do to the rules of parliament.

I see the time is moving, Mr. Speaker, and I must move on. What I think really has to be said, and to which there is no answer, is that 75c is not needed; there is no call for it whatsoever. We have been getting along well since Christmas in parliament up until a couple of weeks ago.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): We had a couple of delays. The only piece of legislation with regard to which we had any significant delay was the omnibus Criminal Code bill. I was in favour of it, but I submit that there was a case for hon. members to have the opportunity to debate that bill because of the strong feelings they held about it. Even that bill could have been dealt with under 75B. With regard to the languages bill, if you want to say it was debated at length, it could have been dealt with under 75B. Perhaps it could have been dealt with under 75A. There has not been a single instance since Christmas when 75c was needed—not one.

Why, then, spoil the relationships we have had in this house in the past five months? We have had our disagreements and arguments, but we have agreed scores of times. The President of the Privy Council has risen in the house on many occasions and said: Mr. Speaker, I think you will find there is general agreement about this. What do we do? We get up over here and say: Yes, that is agreed, Mr. Speaker. It is as simple as that. We have settled scores of things. We have given up a lot of days. We have made switches of various kinds. We have had, in my view, one of

the best sessions we have ever had procedurally in regard to getting things through the house.

We have dealt with these questions on the basis of consultation. We have reached a consensus most of the time. There have been a few slips. Sometimes my friend the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) has said no, and we have sometimes had to agree that he was right. Once in a while a Conservative has said no. It does not do any harm to have a little difference once in a while and take a little time to debate a subject upon which even one hon. member feels strongly. But in the main parliament has operated on the basis of consultation. It has gone well. One of my colleagues, if he gets the floor today, will list the number of items we have put through the house. It has been a good session. Now the government wants to spoil it all by putting us at arm's length, which it has done in the past two or three weeks. We are at arm's length over this issue, and this is a good way to stall parliament.

I submit that the government, having come to its senses last night over one point, should now come to its senses over this proposed rule and drop it. When we talk to people outside, or to the press boys at the coffee table, the one thing everybody seems to agree upon is that this rule is not needed. They ask: Why has the government brought it in? It is not really necessary at all.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to deal with what is perhaps a fundamental, almost philosophical question in relation to this whole business. If someone stands, as I do, and says he believes in allocating time and planning the work of the year, as I do, the question comes back: If you agree to that, if you are in favour of planning, don't you have to do something to limit debate? I agree it is necessary to limit debate. This parliament has done it. We have limited the debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. It is eight days now, it was ten days a few years ago, and at times took 30 days when I first came here. There was no limit, but it went on for as many as 28 or 30 days. We have limited the debate on the budget. We have limited the debate on the estimates. We have made life easy for this government.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My friends over there are laughing. They just have not been around here long enough.