

*Procedure and Organization*

At that time we were also looking forward to reviewing the estimates of the departments in committees in order that we might determine the strengths and weaknesses of the government. As a matter of fact it was my understanding that the committee system was to be the cornerstone of the Prime Minister's, (Mr. Trudeau) concept of the just society, a place where duly elected members could take part in the new participatory democracy, and freely express their viewpoint gleaned at the grass root level in respect of matters of national importance. The government would then know the feelings of Canadians in general in respect of legislation placed before parliament. We have since learned otherwise.

There was much to be done and the committees set out on bold new voyages of discovery. For example, the External Affairs Committee went to Europe and returned with its report, a report I might add which was significantly ignored by the Prime Minister and his colleagues. The Agriculture Committee also reviewed at close range the serious difficulties facing the west. Another committee, the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, studied the problems of particular interest in the Atlantic provinces, and the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry travelled to the west coast to study the problems of the fisheries and forestry industry in that area. At that time those of us on the committee learned that there is more than the Rocky Mountains separating and dividing British Columbia from the rest of Canada.

As we looked forward at the beginning of 1969 to participating in the work of these committees, many members in the house did not speak on the special committee report last December, leaving consideration of these matters to members more practised in procedure, and at that time the government bowed to our objections. However, on this occasion it would appear that the one ingredient necessary to provide good government, namely, common sense, has been thrown out the window. Therefore I feel compelled to speak out about the government's unacceptable and objectionable attempt to ram 16A, by another name, down the throats of members of this house.

It is necessary that I speak out against the implementation of rule 75c because my constituents take strong exception to compulsion of any kind. My constituents are rugged individualists. In a free democratic society, they believe they should have the right to choose or reject any government program or

[Mr. Crouse.]

policy. They did not like, for example, the compulsory aspect of the Canada Pension Plan. I received numerous letters attesting to that fact. They did not like the compulsory aspect of the federal medicare plan, and again I had numerous letters attesting to that fact. They do not like the idea of their member of parliament being compelled to sit silent on the order of the President of the Privy Council, or of any other cabinet minister, while legislation is introduced in this house which may not meet with their overall approval.

I believe it is necessary for me to speak out against rule 75c. If this rule should be approved this may well be the last opportunity open to me to speak on any legislation of a controversial nature debated in this house in the future.

• (4:10 p.m.)

This rule seeks to throttle parliament. It will limit and destroy the rights of members of this house whose sole purpose is to represent the views of those who elected them. I believe that what I now say represents accurately the opinions and concerns of some 63,000 people who reside in my constituency. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, they do not expect me to speak on every measure brought before the house, because if all members did so legislation would be bogged down in this chamber. But my constituents expect me to reserve the right to speak on any issue. It is that right I hope to preserve by participating in this debate.

My constituents are also concerned that the government should try to muzzle parliament instead of turning its attention to the real problems of Canadians. The hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher), who preceded me, pointed out that his party at the last federal election received a majority and not us, and this gave them the right to determine the time that would be required to debate issues brought before the house. I remind him and the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacDonald) that they represent the government and the government has a majority in the house, which gives them the privilege of sitting on the right hand of the Speaker and bringing down legislation for consideration by the house. But the rules under which legislation is to be examined are, in my view, the prerogative of the house. They are not the prerogative of the government. They are not the prerogative of you, Mr. Speaker, whose duty it is, in my opinion, to interpret the rules and act as a referee.