

*Procedure and Organization*

ourselves. I feel that this has been one of the factors in the public's disenchantment with parliament and the democratic process in general.

● (4:40 p.m.)

It is important to realize that in years gone by it may have been necessary to take four, five or six months for an issue to percolate across the country. But the electronic media have changed this.

I, like the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), wish to give examples to indicate how radically our whole political system has been transformed by the growth and effectiveness of the electronic medium. Slightly over 90 per cent of the country is now covered by television. When the Pearson government was defeated in February, 1968, the battle over the defeat of the government respecting a money bill was fought not so much in this chamber but over the television air-waves and in the rotunda of this building. It was fought through interviews on television with the Prime Minister, Mr. Pearson, and with leading spokesmen of the opposition. When we received the feedback and when the public had made their decision, opposition ceased and the government was sustained in power.

The second point I want to make is that government issues are not brought down to the floor of the House of Commons out of the blue. There usually is a long debate in the body politic before that issue arises in the form of a government motion or bill. It is important to realize this because we have opted for a system of consensus politics in Canada. There are very few issues that have not been vetted before the public first and that have not been the subject of debate in election campaigns prior to coming before parliament.

As an example of this, I wish to refer to the report of the Carter Commission on tax reform. This indicates some of the studies and the amount of public debate that have been carried on in consequence. First of all there was debate in the house and across the country which led to the appointment of the royal commission. Then there was debate on the terms of reference of that commission. Then there were the public hearings when submissions were made to that commission. Then followed the report of the commission and public debate on the report. Now there is to be a white paper. There will be public debate respecting the white paper. There will be public debate with regard to that white paper

when it is sent to committee. There will be committee hearings, a committee report, a government bill and finally it will begin its way through the House of Commons.

This will probably be one of the most important bills we will deal with in this House of Commons. The policies of the government will probably be acceptable to most of the Canadian population. We will concern ourselves in this House of Commons with the details and application of those policies. I suggest it is not necessary to take innumerable months of time to discuss this bill intelligently.

**Mr. Barnett:** Will the hon. member permit a question? I wish to ask the hon. member on what grounds he speaks with such confidence that the government proposals in the tax reform bill when it is introduced in parliament will be generally accepted by the Canadian people? How does the hon. member know that now?

**Mr. Reid:** The only way I know that is because of how the Canadian political system operates. Very seldom do the extremists get into power, as I am sure the hon. member and the party of the other extreme realize. Normally items introduced by a government have a great deal of public support because political parties tend to aim for the middle of the political spectrum. That is where the majority is. You can be sure the government will introduce measures which are generally acceptable. There are minor exceptions. We all admit that. Generally speaking, though on a matter of importance there can be absolutely no doubt that the government will do what it thinks the majority of the electors wants it to do.

Another example is the genesis of the national Broadcasting Act which followed almost that same pattern. You can look at the public debate which was initiated and to a large extent sponsored by the government—

**Mr. Paproski:** What about 75c?

**Mr. Reid:** That was vetted before. We had about six reports from the committee on procedure. There was a good debate on rule 16A last December. The matter has been raised before. I suggest to the hon. member for Edmonton Centre (Mr. Paproski) that this is an item on which the public is fully informed. I suggest 75c will find general approval among the electors of Canada.

The last aspect I wish to deal with is the type of government we have in Canada which