

*Procedure and Organization*

As has been pointed out by the other hon. members, we ran into the same situation last Christmas. This matter was brought up just when everybody was getting ready to go home for Christmas. I hesitate to use the word "vacation" because all hon. members know very well that when they return home it is not much of a vacation since so many people wait to see one with requests, but at least all members were getting ready to change the locale of their work.

What was brought in was called rule 16A. After a few days' discussion some arrangement was made to refer the matter back for further discussion. I am not a member of the particular committee but I understand that there was discussion off and on during the winter and spring and then, just before the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) announced that parliament would adjourn for the summer months on June 27, the matter was brought up again. Everything else that the government wished to be done was cleared off the order paper and only this was left. It is like putting a carrot in front of a horse and telling it "you eat it and then you will get out to pasture for the summer". This is the gimmick. They tried it at Christmas but it did not work. Again they are trying it now. Many people are on vacation. The press gallery is empty, and that is important to the government. Nevertheless, they are trying to see if this ruse will work again. This bit of gamesmanship is all right, I suppose.

● (5:40 p.m.)

There is another aspect I should like to bring before Your Honour, and it is one which I believe to be important. Under 75c as now proposed, the length of time during which a bill may be discussed in a standing committee can be laid down by the leader of the house. But suppose a complicated bill dealing with transport, the Criminal Code, finance or taxation is before a committee. Witnesses are, of course, asked to give their views. The other day in the Finance Committee the President of the Bank of Canada, Mr. Rasminsky, gave evidence. He was asked a very simple question, or at least it was a very short question. Being an eminent man in his field, Mr. Rasminsky attempted to give a complete answer, which took him 20 to 25 minutes. How can the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) or anyone else for that matter possibly figure out in advance how long it would take to examine adequately a complicated bill on taxation, justice, or what have you? Witnesses are invited to express

[Mr. Nesbitt.]

their opinions, and to say in advance that they should be limited to an hour or an hour and a half is utter nonsense. I do not know whether the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) has thought of this aspect or not, but if he has not he should have done so.

There is another area which has been well dealt with by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas), among other hon. members. What are we here for? One of the purposes of this place is to allow opportunities for elected members to express their views and those of their constituents. It does not matter whether they are from Montreal or Toronto or Prince Edward Island or British Columbia. Every member here has a right to express himself on matters which concern his conscience, his constituents, and so on. This may not be very interesting to members from Montreal or Toronto who dominate the government party, but members from western Canada, a region which is now facing problems in connection with the sale of grain, or members from Cape Breton, which is having trouble with the coal industry, have a right to make those difficulties known. It may not be of much interest to members from Toronto or Montreal, but it is of great interest to people in the parts of Canada which are directly concerned. It should not be necessary to remind people of this, but obviously it is.

Everyone agrees that the government must not be unnecessarily impeded in the discharge of its business. The leader of the N.D.P. put it very well this afternoon, I thought. The whole question here is now to strike a balance between a reasonably expeditious conduct of the government's program on the one hand, and opportunities for members who are really interested in these things to express themselves. As several hon. members have said this afternoon, this is best done by agreement. In parliament as everywhere else, you cannot do business by forcing people or by threatening them at gunpoint or by using rules such as 75c. You can bring in all the rules you like but if there is not agreement to get things done, ways can be found of frustrating them.

I have not seen much evidence of business being held up in the present session. Some have suggested that members of the Creditiste party did so. That is not my opinion. They felt very deeply about some of the matters dealt with in the Criminal Code, perhaps more deeply than did others, but they were matters of conscience and it is understandable