

*Procedure and Organization*

purpose of the government in introducing this rule is to force certain questionable measures through quickly. It is simply a less blatant measure of closure and one which the government thinks it can use without contracting the odium which the use of our regular rule of closure might bring down on it.

The fact that we have a closure rule makes introduction of rule 75c superfluous and unnecessary. If real obstruction is taking place, of a nature which the general public disapproves of, the government can use closure without fear. When they cannot use it without fear is when public opinion is against them. It is for cases such as this that they want rule 75c, cases when public opinion is against them. When they are wrong, they want to use 75c. I submit it is a thoroughly undemocratic device and one which any government calling itself Liberal should be ashamed to be introducing into this chamber.

A further argument has been put forward against this measure. My time is getting short therefore I will not go into it. The argument is that this proposed rule is ambiguous. This in itself should be enough for the government to withdraw it. There has been a great deal of discussion and argument as to what this rule actually means, how it will be interpreted, and what the general result of it will be. If the government were a reasonable government this should be sufficient reason for it to withdraw the rule.

I believe rule 75c is a thoroughly bad and unnecessary proposal. I hope the government will realize this and end their efforts to force it through the house.

**Mr. Hy Chappell (Peel South):** Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be short, but I hope helpful. I have a suggestion to make which could possibly shorten this debate.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Chappell:** I believe this suggestion has sufficient merit to warrant consideration by the government and the opposition. I look forward to hearing comment on it from some of the members of the Official Opposition now in the house. It is somewhat different from the suggestion reputed to be mine and put forward last Friday by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Deachman).

Rule 75B provides that when there is a majority, that is to say, three of the four house leaders agreeing in respect to the allotment of time, the minister can implement that agreement by a motion. The logic seems

[Mr. Harkness.]

obvious enough, namely, that a large or relatively strong majority cannot be delayed in their work by a small minority.

If the Official Opposition and the N.D.P. agreed with the government, the majority would be 248 over 14. If the Official Opposition and the Creditistes agreed with the government, it would be 240 over 22. No one argues in this debate that a group as small as 14 or 22 should hold up a large majority. If the Creditistes and the N.D.P. agreed with the government, there would be 190 in agreement and the other 72, members of the Official Opposition, could not hold up what the 190 wish to get ahead with in the house.

• (3:40 p.m.)

So far I follow that logic. But there is another combination which has been overlooked, namely the government and the Official Opposition. That would be 226 over 36. As 75B now stands the Official Opposition with 72 members does not have as much weight as the two small groups with a total of 36. Something is wrong. How do 36 members become more powerful than 72 members?

The hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) when speaking last week said all hon. members are equal in the House of Commons. I would like to agree with him but certainly it is difficult to do so when we see 36 members with more say in respect of allotment of time than 72 members

I say that our thinking is all wrong in two respects. First, we must recognize the importance of the members rather than their parties. There should be no premium or reward in this House of Commons because a member belongs to a third choice or a fourth choice party, or possibly in the future to a fifth, sixth or seventh choice party.

Second, as 75B stands we overlook the essence of democracy, namely, that the party with the greatest majority forms the government. But there is another party that is important, the Official Opposition, the Loyal Opposition, which has carried out that most important role for centuries. It is that party which stands ready to take over should we lose the confidence of this house. No other party in this house can possibly form the government except by a vague hope, and even then only after another election. The small parties may stand ready and hope sometime to become the Official Opposition but they cannot during the life of this parliament. The people elected us, the Liberals, to form the government, and the opposition stands ready to take over. I think we break