

*Procedure and Organization*

authority to allocate time, completely ignored an equal responsibility resting on members of the Liberal party with respect to a legislative timetable. When I mention the Liberal party members may I say in parenthesis that they may have been liberal at some time or another in their history.

The minister ignored the very development of the party system which gave to the Crown, as it moved into the centre of parliament through the instrument of cabinet, a greater potential for tyranny than it ever exercised when it remained outside parliament. At that time your predecessors in office, Mr. Speaker, had to be bold and courageous men to present the messages of parliament to the king.

The minister also ignored the political history of recent years. He ignored the fact that the political manoeuvrings of his party were certainly as much responsible for any backlog of public legislation as any action taken on this side of the house. Here, I am referring to the period that goes back to 1963. I have said it before, Mr. Speaker, and I will say it again, that I do not recall ever being more angry in my life than when I was sitting at home and heard the Prime Minister's predecessor in office announce that he was calling the 1965 general election. We had just left Ottawa for a recess with full arrangements made for a timetable of programmed legislation in the fall.

If I may mention one thing in which I happened to be involved, arrangements had been made for a program of visits by the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs to various Indian reservations across the country, so that members of the committee would come to know the needs and ideas of the Indian people. Had that tour taken place, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) might not be in quite so much hot water as he is with the Indian people. In the light of the performance of his own political friends, I submit that the government house leader should take a second look at his request for this authority on the basis of what he suggests was obstruction on the part of the opposition.

The minister also made much of the argument that the will of the majority must prevail in this house. I listened to him carefully on this point. Nobody would quarrel with the statement that the will of the majority prevails in making decisions in a democratic assembly. However, he failed to recognize the distinction between coming to a majority decision on a government proposal and the

[Mr. Barnett.]

fact that the basic rules of parliament should not be altered by a majority vote without regard to the wishes of members of a particular group who, at a particular moment in the history of this institution, happen to be in a minority position.

He also failed to draw a distinction between arriving at decisions on time allocation and arriving at decisions on how and under what circumstances we should change the rules of the house. I would agree that in considering the allocation of time there is a point at which the decision of the majority of the house must prevail. But the minister's argument on this score was specious because he ignored another fact. It is that the rules of the house already provide for a means of terminating debate according to the wishes of the majority of the members of the house.

While that rule in its present form may not be perfect, nevertheless it was put into our standing orders after a great deal of wrestling and rather violent debate many years ago. Its existence in the Standing Orders has not been seriously challenged during the last several parliaments. In fact, I have heard no suggestion from any quarter of the house that the present closure rule be taken out of our rule book.

• (8:40 p.m.)

If the closure rule is not quite appropriate to deal with certain situations brought about by recent rule changes, then this is a matter which the house could very well ask the Procedures Committee to consider. I have not been one of the members of this house who has seriously attempted to become knowledgeable on some of the finer points of the rules of this house. I have had, however, a considerable exposure to argumentation on the subject over a period of years, and there have been a good many arguments about the rules in recent parliaments. Certainly, during my experience as a member of this house in six of the last seven parliaments, this is the second time a naked attempt has been made by the government to use its will to bend parliament as an institution. I do not like it now any more than I did when I witnessed it in this house in 1956. I have in my hand volumes 4 and 5 of *Hansard* for the sessions of 1956. I took them home a week ago last Sunday and read a certain debate, commonly referred to as the pipeline debate, more or less from cover to cover. I should like to commend these volumes of *Hansard* to members of this house, particularly those members who sit as supporters of the government. I