

Procedure and Organization

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. The hon. member for Lotbinière on a point of order.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, this confirms what I was saying a moment ago. I should like the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) to withdraw his remarks and to say clearly that if we took a greater part than usual in the debate on the omnibus bill, it is because it was a controversial bill. It is exactly the principle we are advocating at this time—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order, this is not a point of order, the hon. member is starting a debate.

[*English*]

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I point out that what happens, in effect, when an excess of time is taken on one or two bills is, as has happened so often in this parliament recently and as is the case with the present order paper, that major matters of importance on the current order paper, for example, with regard to educational television, financial institutions and expropriation, cannot be dealt with in the time available. As I have already indicated, there are only so many sitting days in the year and the time has to be divided carefully among the number of sitting days so that we can assure that each measure will be dealt with.

Perhaps the best statement with regard to minority closure, that is, where a small number of members of the house take up so much time that all the measures on the order paper cannot be dealt with, was made in the debate of May 20, 1965, on the resolution regarding House of Commons procedures. The particular passage to which I refer will be found at page 1531 of *Hansard*, when the speaker said:

Let us on the opposition side of the house realize that arrangements for the limitation of debate—

Mr. Woolliams: Who said this?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):

—arrangements for the allocation of time, are not to be shouted down by calling them closure. Methods whereby debate is limited, whereby debate comes to an end at a certain time, are not nearly as serious a form of closure as is the situation we are faced with when, by endless talk on one or two subjects, the opportunity to get at other subjects is completely foreclosed. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it is in the interests of those of us on the opposition side of the house that there be planning of our time so that we can get at all of the items that are before parliament—all of the matters of business that demand our attention.

[Mr. Fortin.]

That is what the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said in 1965. I agree with him that minority closure involved in not allowing sufficient time to deal with major measures before the house is something which has to be dealt with in this parliament. The present set of rules suggested by this side of the house is, in our opinion, the best means of assuring this in any particular case.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, would the minister permit a question?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Perhaps I might be allowed to continue, Mr. Speaker, because my time is limited.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): We will give the President of the Privy Council all kinds of time. In addition to his agreeing with what I said, will he also agree with my contention that this should be arrived at by consent?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): The hon. member, of course, says that this should be arrived at by consent. To say that agreement has to be arrived at by the consent of all four parties is to say that one of those parties is to have a veto. That is what the hon. member seeks; he seeks to have a veto over the conduct of the house. I do not blame him. I do not suggest it is immoral or that there is anything improper about it. It is an attempt to gain political power, and he is entitled to do that. Equally, we on our side are entitled to reject his attempt to get that power and control over parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Woolliams: There is no doubt about it; Perrault is the toughest pounder in the west.

● (5:40 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order, please. The hon. member for Lotbinière.

Mr. Fortin: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): The hon. member for Lotbinière on a question of privilege.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I wish to call your attention to the fact that in many instances since the beginning of this debate, the President of the Privy Council—perhaps he is not