

Procedure and Organization

of acting on the basis of consultation and consensus, we are now—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My hon. friends can laugh, but it is a fact. I have been here as long as most people in this house—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

An hon. Member: Be quiet over there.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): During the past six months we have had more dealing with parliamentary business by consensus and consultation than in all the years I have been here.

An hon. Member: Right.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, that way of doing things is being destroyed by the action the government is now taking.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I would point out, as the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) has said, that during the past several days we have had a number of meetings, five or six I believe. During the course of those meetings we have laid our various propositions on the table. Sometimes the discussion has been a bit tight, but most of the time it has been quite civilized. We agreed to a number of things. For example there was agreement among all of us that it does not make sense to apply 75c to the standing or special committee stage of a bill. Now we are being told that 75A, 75B and 75C are to be put through in their present form, and that 75c will apply to the standing or special committee stage of a bill.

Under this provision it will be possible to send a major or most important bill to a standing committee and give that committee one day in which to deal with it. This is being proposed by a government that has traded on the phrase "participatory democracy".

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

An hon. Member: Disgraceful.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The whole theme of this parliament has been the upgrading of the work of our committees so that they can do a better job, and give all members of all parties a chance to participate in the legislative process by the upgrading of the work of the committees. Now we are

being asked to put through, under the old 1913 closure rule, another closure rule which can be invoked to limit the debate in committees to one day. They talk of participatory democracy—this is not democracy at all.

● (5:20 p.m.)

I say to you, Sir, and to other members of the house, that there were a number of other things agreed upon in our discussions since four o'clock last Thursday afternoon. We agreed that perhaps one day's debate on second reading was not enough, and that perhaps one day on the report stage was not enough. This is what is possible under 75c, but we did reach an agreement to modify this position. Some of us wanted more than the government was willing to give, but the government was willing to move a bit. Now that is all down the drain. Negotiations are over. Negotiations have been broken off by a government decision announced to us about 40 minutes ago, with the government coming in here and indicating that what is before us has to be put through under the old 1913 rule of closure.

They tell us over there to get up to date, get with it and live in the 1960's and 1970's. Yet they are going to employ a rule that was brought in in 1913 in the midst of a debate that the Liberals were filibustering. They complained at the time that the thing that was wrong with the rule was that it was brought in in the middle of a debate and then used to put a stop to a debate which had started under a different set of rules.

That is what is going to happen now. We started this debate, on a motion to adopt the third report of the committee, under certain rules of debate. We are now being told there is no more of that, and no more participatory democracy and no more freedom of speech. By one a.m. tomorrow night, or in other words in the early hours of Thursday, July 24, the will of the government will be voted on in this House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I hope *Hansard* will note that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and his cabinet, most of whom are here for this occasion, are applauding the fact that at one a.m. on Thursday, July 24, the government, with the support of its backbenchers, will get its will, which is the use of closure to invoke a further rule of closure.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.