

*Procedure and Organization*

This, Mr. Speaker, is strangely similar to the present Standing Order 33 which reads as follows:

Immediately before the order of the day for resuming an adjourned debate is called, or if the House be in committee of the whole—

That becomes interesting. And note that is nearly word for word.

—any Minister of the Crown who, standing in his place, shall have given notice at a previous sitting—

This, Mr. Speaker, is exactly how Standing Order 75c reads.

—of his intention so to do may move that the debate shall not be further adjourned, or that the further consideration shall be the first business of the committee—

This is rule 33, at page 28 of the Standing Orders adopted in January 1969.

Mr. Speaker, there is a strange similarity between Standing Orders 75c and 33. We can find it also between Standing Orders 16A and 75c.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, that is all one.

Standing order 16A 3(b) read as follows, and I quote:

The Chairman—

In other words, the President of the Privy Council—

—from his place in the house can give verbal notice of the meetings arranged for the said committee—

Or for the sittings of the house—

—in any case, written notice of such a meeting, etc.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would not want to take the time of the house to read rule 16A, which was rejected, besides, and rightly so. If any hon. member put side by side on his desk rule 75c, standing order 33 and rule 16A, he would find, on reading them that they are almost identical. He would see that the object is the same in the three cases: to limit debate and to put a stop to it.

Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what we do not accept. The opposition has no wish to be controlled or muzzled.

Mr. Speaker, I would not want to take up too much of the time allotted to hon. members nor to impose upon my hon. colleagues' kindness, but I still have some important comments to make at this time.

Many before me have spoken with emphasis and have expressed the hope of greater co-operation between the party in power and the opposition.

[Mr. Fortin.]

The President of the Privy Council has complained in the house about the lack of co-operation between the parties. However, the opposition calls the hon. members on the government side high-handed people, who want to establish a totalitarian system.

Mr. Speaker, this is what gave birth, I think, to Standing Order 75c. As a matter of fact, while yielding to the temptation to control everything, the majority government said to itself: By controlling the business of the house, we will avoid quibbling, discussions and loss of time.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that does not make any sense for the following reason. In the same way that the government is asking the opposition every day to compromise, to make concessions and to co-operate, it should also compromise and co-operate.

I suggest this is the stumbling-block of this discussion which is altogether too often forgotten.

Members of the house rise at any time to blame their colleagues of their lack of co-operation, of abuse of power, of the rules, of anything you wish, but everyone seems to forget that if we were willing to co-operate, nothing would be easier as far as setting up time limits is concerned.

Here is the proof. The whole opposition seems to agree on rules 75A and 75B. Most government members say that the standing orders of the House of Commons are archaic. That is true, Mr. Speaker. They say that the House of Commons is held up to ridicule, in many respects, by Canadian people. That also is true, Mr. Speaker. But blocking the business, imposing closure, muzzling hon. members from all sides of the house, that is not a step forward, it is a step backward.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, if there is to be real co-operation, there must not be on any side drastic measures or filibustering, except if we are deliberately provoked, as the government did during the debate on the omnibus bill.

And even there, we were right, because we were faithful to the mandate conferred on us by our electors, for is that not the purpose of our presence here? Were we not commissioned to act in conformity with the will of our electors and to see that it is respected?

However, it goes without saying that in certain circumstances, during consideration of this or that bill, where public opinion is aroused against its adoption, where the consequences of its adoption could be very detrimental to a large part of the population, hon.