

*Procedure and Organization*

posed of unreasonable members of parliament, we never would have had the vast changes that were drafted, brought in, and accepted by this house last December.

As I have read rule 75c, it seems to me that the most objectionable feature is the fact that it could effectively gag the opposition on major and controversial legislation. It is not good enough to have the government house leader, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), or someone else stand up in the House of Commons and say, you can trust us, we will make certain this is only used on those rare occasions when debate has exceeded the limits to which we think it should go."

That is not good enough. You do not draft laws that way. You do not draft procedures that way. What would happen if the laws of this country were left wide open in this manner? You must legislate or make changes that cannot be circumvented by people who might want to use them for their own purposes. That is one of the obvious reasons why this particular piece of legislation should go back to the committee.

As I understand 75c, Mr. Speaker, if it becomes operative it will make legal the right of any government to plan and carry out closure in advance. I feel this is a dangerous and dictatorial move that will boomerang on the present administration. It is not worthy of any Canadian political party which is supposed to be based on democratic ideas. It is difficult to imagine how it fits into the government slogan of a just society.

Parliamentary freedom is above both the party and the individual. No one group should ever have the right indiscriminately to deny this basic right to others under our parliamentary constitution. I am surprised that the Liberal Party have asked for this dictatorial power. I am more concerned that not one of their elected members has had the courage to speak out against what is obviously a blatant attempt to gag opposition spokesmen in parliament.

Provision for closure in advance of adequate debate is an insult to every Canadian citizen. It is an insulting defiance of every elector who cast a Liberal vote in the federal election of one year ago. It is another crystal clear sign of the contemptuous attitude being displayed by the government and its leader to our parliamentary traditions.

Again I urge the house to turn down the proposal made by the committee and the government, and to send it back for further discussion with other parties. Reasonable mem-

bers in all parties can work out any procedural differences if enough effort is put into resolving them. If a solution cannot be found by these members, then our nation is in a bad way. Perhaps a paragraph from a recent editorial in the December 12, 1968, issue of the *Globe and Mail* will best illustrate the point I have mentioned, and I quote:

Nothing is more fundamental to democracy than the belief that society is composed of reasonable men. They will have their irrational moments and a system of checks and balances will be needed. And there will be occasions when reason seems forfeited to hysteria, opportunism, malice or any number of things. But if faith in the reasonableness of men is lost, then so is democracy. For government must then become authoritarian. It must cast aside all pretence of governing according to the wishes of the people. At its most enlightened, it will govern according to what it considers is best for the people. Although it may be benevolent, it can never be democratic.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that our differences on procedure can be ironed out in committee. I fully support the amendment moved by the hon. member for Peace River. The proposed amendment asks that the house refer the report back to the committee with instructions to delete proposed rule 75c.

There is no objection from any of the opposition parties in the house to 75A and 75B. At least I have not heard any objection during this debate. In fact the members of the opposition groups helped to draft these changes in committee and will endorse them now. However, 75c is the undemocratic creation of the government. It is their suggested method of gagging the opposition parties in the House of Commons. The mere fact that the present government, with their large group of freshmen members, insist on this dictatorial rule is a fair indication of their dismay and panic at the loss of prestige suffered in just one year by their administration. They seem to have lost all sense of history and feel that by muzzling the opposition their troubles will go away.

● (5:00 p.m.)

The fact is that this government is in trouble. It is in major trouble, and that trouble is nation wide because of a lack of policy and direction seldom before seen to the extent it has been displayed by the present administration. We have all heard the old theory of the divine right of kings. It was a belief that the king could do no wrong. It would seem to me there has been a rebirth of this old idea so far as the present administration is concerned. The Liberal group in parliament feel that Pierre can do no wrong. This blind faith,