

Procedure and Organization

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am now taking that into account and I am sure that all hon. members will agree to allow the hon. member an extra minute.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I quote a few sentences from the article to which I referred?

A mass demonstration was planned for today outside the Provincial Liberal headquarters—

More than 3,000 pamphlets were being handed out to the public, protesting "the threats which now seem to be posed to parliamentary and participatory democracy—"

Rule 75c in its current form is extremist and we believe it does not reflect the views of any political party in Canada, including the Liberals.

I conclude by saying that this is indeed a dark day for parliament and participatory democracy.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): This debate, Mr. Speaker, is no longer concerned with the subject with which it commenced some two weeks ago. It has strayed considerably. At the outset of this debate, the issue before you, Mr. Speaker, was the desirability or otherwise of adopting a technique for the allocation of time to legislative debate. That, however, is no longer the issue. The issue has been changed by the opposition parties who allege that more is involved than mere procedural reform, that at stake in this debate is nothing less than the role of parliament itself.

The opposition parties contend, and they have repeated this contention again and again, inside the house and out, that the opposition possesses the right to debate, and by debating indefinitely delay passage of any legislative proposal for as long as the opposition desires;—

Mr. Monteith: That is completely wrong.

Mr. Trudeau: —that if this so-called "right" is impaired—

Mr. Monteith: Again, that is completely wrong.

Mr. Trudeau: —parliament itself will be injured. Parliament will be destroyed. This is an important, if novel, contention, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that the opposition's efforts to publicize it have been successful. I hope that all concerned Canadians are acquainted with

[Mr. Thompson (Red Deer).]

such a theory. For what has been put forward, and claimed by the opposition as non-negotiable principle, is a series of propositions for which no precedent exists elsewhere and for which no need has been shown here.

Parliamentary democracy, as defined so far in this debate by hon. members opposite, becomes something other than a system which gives to the majority party in the House of Commons the right to ask parliament for some decision upon the legislation the government deems necessary in order to carry out its mandate to the people.

Parliamentary democracy is not, according to this opposition definition, a system which permits the majority party to demand a vote on the proposals it seeks to incorporate into statute as solutions to the needs of the nation.

These views, Mr. Speaker, are, if nothing more, highly original, and if accepted by the government would revolutionize political theory. I should hesitate to accept them, however, without knowing more about them. Where in this scheme, for example, lies the responsibility for legislating, Mr. Speaker? Apparently nowhere. In its place we are told that parliamentary democracy no longer means government by the majority, with adequate protections for the rights of the minority. Instead, it seems to mean that a minority of the members of the house have the right to block for indefinite periods the wishes of the majority of Canadians as expressed in general elections.

● (8:10 p.m.)

If this be the opposition's view of what democracy is all about, it is fortunate that the people of Canada have been given this opportunity to learn of it. If the opposition accords so little respect to parliament that it defines governing as evil, that getting on with the job is regarded as tyranny, then I am happy to be given the chance to join issue. When the people of Canada returned this government to office they gave to it the responsibility of governing. We accepted that responsibility. We shall gladly leave to the electorate the assessment as to how that responsibility has been discharged during our term in office.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: We leave to the electorate as well the assessment of which side of this house respects parliament more, that which engages in repetitious speeches that serve to deny the passage of legislation indefinitely; perhaps that which chooses on occasion to play games with the rules or hide-and-peek in