

Procedure and Organization

unlike the proposed Standing Order 16A. That standing order contemplated that orders for the allocation of time for legislation could be made in advance of any proceedings on the legislation, that they could cover any number of bills and any number of stages in debate on the bills. Under standing order 75c it is clearly provided that it can apply only to one bill and one stage at a time, and this, in my submission, should meet an objection made to standing order 16A that the country could not under that order be guaranteed of being advised of important issues coming forward in debate in this chamber. In a nutshell—

Mr. Stanfield: That is where it was.

Mr. Blair:—having explained the mechanics of standing order 75c, one can say that at the very minimum it contemplates three days at second reading, three days in committee and four days to cover report and third reading stages, and in the very unlikely event that these times were cut to a minimum, no bill can go through this chamber unless it is the subject of at least ten days of debate.

Some hon. Members: That is not true.

Mr. Woolliams: Would the hon. member permit a question? I have a lot of respect for the hon. member. We came from the same university and I believe he is very able, but I should like to put this question to him. As a person of integrity can he stand up in his place and say that there would be no debate on any bill which would be of shorter duration than ten days under this rule?

Mr. Blair: In answer to my hon. friend, who was my junior at law school, may I say that I fail to see how under this bill less than ten days of elapsed time could be occupied in the discussion of these procedures.

An hon. Member: Not elapsed time, but time in debate.

Mr. Blair: Anybody who disagrees with that should rise in his place and say so.

An hon. Member: Do you want a republic?

Mr. Blair: I would not wish the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) to bring his tribal warfare into the chamber.

Mr. Woolliams: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As I understood the hon. member, he gave the impression that, taking in all stages of the bill, the debate on it could not

[Mr. Blair.]

be shorter than ten days. If that is not what he said, let him declare it now so we can follow the debate. If that is his position, let him come out clearly and say so. Unless he clarifies the situation he is misleading this house, the public and the press.

• (3:10 p.m.)

Mr. Blair: I think that what I have said is clearly on record. There are ten days of elapsed time at least which will be taken up in the discussion of any measure, and procedural matters in relation thereto. If hon. members have comments to make, as they appear to have, they can make them at an appropriate time.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): May I ask a question, so that we shall be clear about the point the hon. member is making? Unless I misunderstood him, his first statement was that there would be ten days of debate. Now he is talking about ten days of elapsed time, and every hon. member knows there is a great deal of difference between the two. Would he clarify what he meant to say? Does he wish to retract his statement about ten days of debate and say there would be ten days of elapsed time?

Mr. Blair: I do not think there is any compulsion on me to retract anything. The rule is clear and I have stated its effect to the best of my ability. Hon. members may have some comments to make on it at a later stage.

I suggest that although they do present some controversial aspects, these rules represent the best recommendations which the committee found it possible to make to enable the house to cope with the vast and increasing volume of business before it. Concern—and I think it is legitimate concern—has been expressed that if there are provisions in our rules which permit the allocation of time to be instituted by motions on behalf of the government, this might have the effect of destroying the good feeling and co-operation which is the basis upon which most of the business of the house is carried on. With respect to this contention it might be of some assistance if I were to mention a few figures presented to us in a report on the practice in the United Kingdom.

It is estimated that 50 per cent of the business of the House of Commons in the United Kingdom proceeds in accordance with an agreed timetable; that 25 per cent is so uncontentious that it requires the application of no timetable, and that of the balance of 25 per cent deemed to be contentious, the majority,