

Procedure and Organization

Mr. Ray Perrault (Burnaby-Seymour): Mr. Speaker, before we adjourned at four o'clock yesterday afternoon I attempted to relate a number of statements made at various times by spokesmen for the other parties in the house in support of time limitation on debate. There is a vast catalogue of speeches made in the house, or before non-political forums, supporting the concept that governments have a responsibility to govern and must ultimately express the wish of the majority of the people of a nation. I quoted the N.D.P. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and the remarks he has made on a number of occasions. I quoted the former prime minister, the hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker).

Basically, we are faced with the question whether after reasonable opportunity for full debate and discussion has been accorded all parties in the house, the government of the day, be it the government of Canada, one of the provincial governments or one of the governments of other parliamentary democracies throughout the commonwealth, has the right to expedite the business of the house and determine when a debate shall end.

● (11:50 a.m.)

There are a number of peripheral issues here. There is a question with respect to how this may be accomplished fairly and within reasonable limits, but our basic question is one of principle. Again we come back to the basic problem, the challenge of attempting to fit into the 365 days of the year the vast proliferation of matters which must be considered on behalf of the Canadian people, and at the same time ensuring the maintenance of a high standard of parliamentary democracy.

The hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) made an excellent speech the other afternoon.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Perrault: I have only 20 minutes left.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Perrault: I know hon. members are enthusiastic about their member who is a good member, but he suggested a very exotic thought, namely, that somehow freedom of speech is endangered under proposed rule 75c because it would restrict the right of members of all parties to express fairly the views held by their constituents. Yet, the same hon. member and his colleagues are enthusiastic supporters of proposed rule 75b. What does rule 75b do? It would expedite the

business of the house with the support of three parties in the house. These members would effectively cut off the right of a fourth party to unlimited free speech. Of course they accept the principle that there must be responsible limits to speeches made in the house.

Let me quote a well known Conservative, a former member of the house, to establish the point which I am attempting to make with respect to limitation of time. The hon. Davie Fulton, speaking to the Couchiching conference in 1964, in a moment of candour perhaps, said:

An important restraint which members should impose upon themselves is to accept as a matter of routine an "allocation of time" system as it operates in the United Kingdom parliament, by which representatives of each party meet in advance to decide how many days will be spent on each major matter of government legislation.

In the unusual circumstance where it is not possible to obtain agreement, the government itself takes responsibility for—and there is a vote upon—a motion for allocation of time on the matter in question.

This is precisely what we have been considering these long and dreary summer days.

Mr. Pappas: Why doesn't your house leader say that?

Mr. Perrault: In that non-political forum a respected Conservative spokesman stated very explicitly that the government indeed has the responsibility to govern and also to exercise the mandate conferred on it.

Again, speaking for that great party sitting to my left in opposition, Mr. Fulton spelled out the following in the same speech:

No matter what mathematical disposition has been arrived at by the voters, parliament has the duty to get on with the business of the country. And the government has the right and the responsibility to govern, so long as it enjoys the confidence of parliament, or at any rate unless and until parliament accepts the responsibility of defeating it.

This is precisely the position which the government of Canada is taking during the course of this debate. This is a crystal clear presentation of the facts of parliament, whether it is at Westminster in Great Britain, in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or any other Commonwealth country. But how different in his philosophy from that expressed by some opposition spokesmen during recent days in this debate!

In the face of an earnest desire on the part of the government to initiate reforms in the public interest, words have been heard in this chamber which have done little credit to