

Procedure and Organization

Mr. Jerome: Certainly.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Would the hon. member say whether he thinks there is any possibility of rule 75B being brought into play, worded as it now is, unless the minister representing the government is part of the majority?

Mr. Jerome: No. I agree with that interpretation.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Then what is all the talking about?

Mr. Jerome: We are talking about the fact that the house leader for the official opposition took precisely the opposite view from that just stated by the hon. member. I completely agree with the hon. member's view. I think his is a proper and sensible interpretation of the rule.

That was the atmosphere in which the rule was discussed in the committee. The rule was inserted into the committee's report. But the minute the difficulty to which I have referred became apparent, all opposition members who have spoken, as did the hon. member, of good will and co-operation dropped the expression like a hot potato because they thought they had an opportunity to gain political advantage over the government. This is what happens to this kind of good will and co-operation in the face of political advantage.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Would the hon. member permit one more question? If the hon. member is satisfied that there is no difficulty about the rule, then why all the panic?

Mr. Jerome: The reason I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, is that what we are dealing with here is whether or not it is necessary to leave in the hands of the government an instrument for resolving our difficulties when good will and co-operation break down. If anyone thinks that good will and co-operation do not break down quickly, then I suggest they are being totally unrealistic. That is why we need rule 75c: where good will and co-operation break down, the situation must be resolved.

To highlight this aspect of the discussion and to put the matter in its proper perspective, I draw the attention of the house to the fact that the last speaker said that we are talking here about one per cent of our business. In giving examples of the kind of difficulties that could be encountered, the hon. member listed three or four items that I think

are so ridiculous as to be absurd. However, it was the nature of his argument, and when you do not have a strong argument, Mr. Speaker, the best thing to do is to try to reduce it to absurd and ridiculous terms. The same can be said of last Christmas, when instead of facing the real issues we talked about one-man meetings of the house leaders—a reduction to absurdity.

In order to maintain a proper perspective, we are talking about the application of rule 75c to about one per cent of the business of the house. If I have misquoted the hon. member who last spoke, then I stand to be corrected.

An hon. Member: Then why do you need the rule?

Mr. Jerome: May I explain why I believe the government needs precisely this power. One of the difficulties about debate and discussion in this chamber is that all hon. members have a tendency to look inward, and they fail to step back and look at the entire problem before them in perspective. Certainly when we concentrate our attention on one subsection of one rule we tend not to see the ramifications of the entire picture.

● (4:40 p.m.)

One manifestation of our concentration is that we fail to appreciate that we have in this matter a long-standing impasse. We are not talking about the elimination of obstruction by opposition parties and anyone who says we are simply confusing the issue. We are not talking here about something that is designed to eliminate obstruction. We are not trying to whip members of the opposition into line. We have come to the point of realizing that it is a good idea to have meetings of house leaders and that it is a good idea for them to agree on how debates should be limited. Let us remember, therefore, that substantially we agree that proposed rules 75A and 75B are a good idea. These rules do say that there must be time allocation before the debate has begun. They contain good ideas and there is nothing reprehensible about them. When the hon. member stands up and says with tears in his eyes that the nation will never stand for the allocation of time in advance of a debate he is losing sight of the fact that his party promoted and supported the provisions of proposed rules 75A and 75B.

● (4:40 p.m.)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.