

Procedure and Organization

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Carry on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous agreement for that?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Bell: Closure.

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond (Mr. MacInnis) upon his approach to this entire problem and for the way he chastised this government.

An hon. Member: Don't be sarcastic.

Mr. Alexander: He criticized the government's attitude vigorously. Yet, even in his bitterness, he had mercy on those who sit on the back benches. He felt for them. He tried to reach out to them and all they did was laugh.

An hon. Member: Right.

Mr. Alexander: And then my hon. friend for Hamilton-Wentworth (Mr. Gibson) pounded the desk. Clearly he is one of the trained seals. I wish, Mr. Speaker, that I had the nerve of the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond and was capable of saying that the government and its supporter are brainless. I wish I had the nerve to say that government supporters are stupid; I wish I had the intestinal fortitude to say they are bums; and, how I wish I had the courage to call them idiots. But, Mr. Speaker, I am a charitable man. I could never stand here and make those remarks. But I can always think them. I can always think they are idiots.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Alexander: I will not take much time. I believe that in its debates this house must reach responsible conclusions. I wish to register my protest to the Prime Minister's (Mr. Trudeau) statement in this house that this debate is stupid. I do not think this debate is stupid; after all, we on this side are fighting for our very lives.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Alexander: We are fighting for our very existence. I was therefore shocked to hear the Prime Minister say that we on this side are hypocrites. I take issue with him most strongly on that.

[Mr. MacInnis.]

I am not an expert on the rules, Mr. Speaker, but then, neither are most hon. members opposite. As a matter of fact, there are probably only ten men in this house who know just what the rules say and who can stand up with a certain amount of integrity and tell the government that these proposed changes are wrong. Although I am not an expert on the rules, unlike others who have said they do not intend to participate in this debate, I have felt it my duty to participate because I am concerned, Mr. Speaker.

• (8:20 p.m.)

I want to speak on behalf of the 80,000 to 90,000 people who sent me here, though the government does not want me to do so. I want to speak on behalf of the trained seals at the rear who have so absorbed the philosophy of "keep your mouth shut, or else" that they cannot stand up like men and be counted. So, with their permission I speak on behalf of several of them, because I know several of them think the way we think.

There is no question that we on this side have been in favour of parliamentary reform. We showed our good intentions in December 1968. As a matter of fact, it was the members of this party who gave leadership in showing which rules should be reformed, why they should be reformed, and what would happen as a result of their reformation. I believe we must have parliamentary reform because the mounting problems that are facing this country daily become more complex and demand immediate action. I also believe we must have parliamentary rules reform because parliament, and its standing committees, must be efficient. They must be able to deal with the many bills that come before them quickly and with a certain responsibility so these measures may come back to the house, pass third reading, and eventually become the law of the land.

These are days of social unrest, when people become extremely impatient with government whether at the federal level, the provincial level or the municipal level. Therefore, parliament must think and act in contemporary terms. In other words, it must become streamlined. I should like the members of the government to know that we have shown our good faith in the area of parliamentary reform, and this good faith was expressed last December by accepting the rules changes holus-bolus. Many of these we had determined. Notwithstanding that, at no time did we say that reform included government without