

*Procedure and Organization*

There is plenty of evidence to show that an imposing amount of legislation and other matters has been dealt with in this chamber since September. It is certainly no fault of the opposition if much of this legislation has not been of great national importance. Some of it may have been valuable in itself, but a lot of it was not legislation to deal with the major problems confronting our country. At any rate, the legislation which was brought forward was dealt with more speedily than similar legislation in previous parliaments.

In some 190 sitting days to date there have been 100 government orders on the order paper. A few have been withdrawn, but all the rest have been dealt with. There are about 18 orders remaining on the order paper now, which means that 85 or so have been dealt with. About 50 bills have been passed.

During the debate on the Speech from the Throne last fall, a debate which under the rules can last for eight days, the four house leaders were, I am sure, somewhat nonplussed to find that after five days they were running out of speakers. They were surprised to find that new members of Parliament were not anxious to get up and speak, on the ground that enough had been said already. As a result, the debate lasted only six days. Many of us felt this was enough. The additional two days were made available for the government. The budget debate which took place in the spring could have lasted six days under the rules. Opposition parties agreed that it should last only four days, thus providing two additional days for the government. Counting six days spent on the address, four days on the budget and 16 opposition days among the total to be subtracted from the number of sitting days available, we are left with 150 or 155 days for legislation. During this time some 50 pieces of legislation were dealt with and passed. I submit that is a very good record. How good the legislation is, is another matter. When you consider the number of items that have been dealt with, no one in this country can say this parliament has not been productive.

• (5:50 p.m.)

Proposed rules 75A and 75B have been arrived at by consensus and agreement. I suggest to the silent 66 members in the two back rows on the government side that these two rules ought to be enough to make parliament function more efficiently. But we can only find out if these rules work if we try them for a while. I urge the government, and those

[Mr. Benjamin.]

occupying the two back rows on the government side, to withdraw proposed rule 75c. Let us adopt the motion of the hon. member for Peace River and try to work under proposed rules 75A and 75B. If there is evidence that opposition parties are obstructing parliament, carrying on a filibuster or hamstringing the government I, for one, will not be nearly so vociferous in objecting to the introduction of 75c. But I am prepared to take my chances.

If the opposition obstructs parliament, it will deserve to work under rule 75c. But is it not reasonable for us to see whether we can work harmoniously under the other two proposed rules first? The government has not made out a sufficiently strong case to show that a rule like 75c is necessary. It has not brought forward evidence that might prompt the people of Canada to say, "Go ahead; with an opposition like that you need 75c." Hon. members may talk about debates in previous parliaments, but this is a new parliament. This is supposed to be a new Liberal government. Let us see how it performs. Let us not refer to past history. In this parliament there are many new members who are anxious to see parliament performing its functions more efficiently.

Ever since I was a small boy—we lived in the middle of the Saskatchewan dust bowl—I remember people talking politics and saying that there was a chronic ailment in the Liberal party. For many decades the Liberals have been convinced that they are the only ones who know how to govern and who are fit to govern. They really believe this. This belief constitutes a chronic ailment within the Liberal party and is one reason that party, despite its choice of new leaders, has continued to be called an old time party.

It has been said many times in this debate that the rules of parliament are the rules of every member of parliament and not of the government alone. No reasonable member of Parliament, particularly if he is in opposition, will acquiesce to rule changes such as are proposed. People are asking how long this debate is to continue. Employees of this house come up to me and ask that question. My answer is that it may continue until September, October or November. We may be here until then and we shall continue talking, Mr. Speaker, until this obnoxious rule is withdrawn. I notice that the government is seeking to hold a club over our heads. There is a motion on the order paper to extend sitting hours. Although I may be out of order in my remarks, may I say briefly that it does not matter whether we are to sit four hours a day