

Procedure and Organization

people creatures of the state? A stand has to be taken, and that stand can only be made in parliament.

The control of the finances of this nation must be returned to the people of this nation, and that can only be done in parliament. It cannot be done in committee; it cannot be done in newspaper editorials; it cannot be done on TV panel shows. It can be done in this house, and this house only. That is why this parliament must rise up and reject the motion by the government and support the amendment proposed by the opposition house leader who clearly set out the dark chasm toward which we are steering. This is the time for parliament to say no and to make it plain that all sides of this house will maintain the supremacy of this institution and its freedom from control from whatever source.

Many editorials were written and many statements made regarding this matter. Perhaps I should quote what the Prime Minister said outside the house, where he usually says things. This is what he said:

—many Canadians have begun to feel parliament is irrelevant. His government will stand or fall on the proposition that reasonable men can take a decision on a proposal after the arguments have been heard, and the decision must be the decision of the majority.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Hear, hear.

Mr. MacEwan: I am glad we have a little support from the Minister of Justice. The Prime Minister said that Canadians have begun to feel that parliament is irrelevant. I do not know where he got this idea. I suggest that he has a lot to learn. Canadians do not feel that parliament is irrelevant and they will prove this at the next election, wherever it may come.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacEwan: My suggestion is that under rules 75A, 75B and 75C members will not have a reasonable chance to speak. The time limit is such that after a lapse of ten days a vote has to be taken. Certainly, this is not a reasonable length of time. This allows only for four days of debate in ten days during which a major bill must be processed. Again I ask the following questions: What will the government bring forward during the fall session that requires us now to pass rule 75c, not to bring in further legislation but to bring in closure on debate in parliament, or closure on closure?

I have listened to my friend, the hon. member for Mercier (Mr. Boulanger). He is much
[Mr. MacEwan.]

changed since the time when we went on trips together. Since the government has a majority he has changed much. He was a pretty good fellow on the trips. When we were out west six years ago he showed democratic inclinations. Even the chairman of the committee, the former member for Hamilton West, was democratic. But now there is a change. We have listened to government backbenchers, and especially to the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Hogarth), who will streamroller over anyone who says that we have been here too long. Rule 75c curtail the right of the opposition to work effectively in this parliament. This is what was said in this regard:

If parliament is to be preserved as a living institution His Majesty's Loyal Opposition must fearlessly perform its functions. When it properly discharges them the preservation of our freedom is assured. The reading of history proves that freedom always dies when criticism ends. It upholds and maintains the rights of minorities against majorities. It must be vigilant against oppression and unjust invasions by the cabinet of the rights of the people. It should supervise all expenditures and prevent over-expenditure by exposing to the light of public opinion wasteful expenditures or worse. It finds fault; it suggests amendments; it asks questions and elicits information; it arouses, educates and molds public opinion by voice and vote. It must scrutinize every action by the government and in doing so prevents the short-cuts through democratic procedure that governments like to make.

It was also said once that:

The absence of a strong opposition means a one party state. A one party state means an all powerful cabinet.

Not every member of this house who has been here a few years has the opportunity to speak as much as he would like. This applies to everyone here, and especially to government backbenchers. Members sitting in the opposition have more opportunity to speak. I suggest this rule 75c will gag parliament. It will curtail the rights of all, and I hope some of the backbenchers on the other side, ordinary members like myself, will not go along with it because—and I say this seriously—if they do, they will live to regret it.

• (11:20 p.m.)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Warren Allmand (Noire-Dame-de-Grâce): While I do not think that I, or anybody else on this side for that matter, will ever be able to convince the opposition that 75c is a good rule, I do believe it is important that we on the back benches on this side