

*Procedure and Organization*

more amendments may be moved or that the whole bill may be thrown out, which remains the basic privilege of democracy. In fact, it is even its corner-stone.

Under Standing Order 75c, opposition members will not only be unable to take any financial or government initiative but the time allotted for the thorough consideration of such measures could also be limited by any minister, at any time, on any subject.

This is sheer nonsense.

Opposition members are blamed for taking too much time but we can indeed blame the government members for never making good use of the time of the house, for never participating in any debate. We even wonder what they are doing here. Why have they been elected? Why are they paid for?

I think that the present debate will, at least, serve the best interests of parliament because members will ask themselves questions about their duties in parliament.

It is easy to blame the members who speak in the house but let us also blame those who never participate in any debate.

Those are the people who would prevent opposition members from doing their job, from doing their part in considering legislation. Mr. Speaker, it is sheer nonsense.

We agree that the rules should be changed in order to avoid, as far as possible any waste of time. We wholeheartedly agree on the wording of orders 75A and 75B, but not on that of 75c.

● (4:50 p.m.)

We must think over the role of the government member as well as that of the opposition member. We must equip ourselves with modern and efficient tools.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that a few days ago, government members met for a famous symposium that will probably go on record, to think over their function. They all asked themselves the following question: What are we doing in Ottawa? What are we doing in parliament? Why did they hold this meeting? Precisely because most of them realized they could not take part in debate. Their role is restricted to being mere numbers in the voting machine.

Mr. Speaker, government members envy opposition members who can be active in debate, and that is why they ought to be congratulated for having asked themselves questions. However, I am at a loss to understand that those same hon. members, who now

demand from their Prime Minister the power, the privilege—which indeed they have and do not exercise—to take part in discussions, would like the opposition members to remain seated and say: You are absolutely right. All bills are good; we remain in our seats. Keep on governing, and in four years, we will have an election.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is preposterous. We cannot tolerate that.

Now back to rules 75A, B and C. Under rule 75A, as one knows, unanimity is required among members of all parties. That means, Mr. Speaker, that whenever the government introduces a bill of national interest or a bill which they believe important and which they want passed as quickly as possible, for all kinds of reason, good in themselves, they seek the advice of the house leader of each opposition party and try to come to what they call a gentlemen's agreement, a friendly agreement between the parties. And if the government does not get that unanimous consent, they could resort to rule 75B, that is a decision between the representatives of the various parties could be reached on a majority basis.

It is clearly mentioned in the amendment, and I quote:

—including that of the government,—

That is more or less what has been happening since the beginning of this session, and it seems that the principle has worked out quite well. Indeed, all parties have been very co-operative, and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) could vouch for it were he in the house at this time.

When the omnibus bill was debated, the Minister of Justice decided at one point to ask for our co-operation. Right away we replied: "We are ready to co-operate." Indeed, Mr. Speaker, an hour and thirty minutes later we were asking ourselves that the question be put. They cannot therefore blame us for uselessly extending the proceedings. We are ready to co-operate. We are showing our good will, but we would like hon. members opposite to do likewise.

However, Standing Order 75c is unacceptable for many reasons. It states that if an agreement cannot be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 75A, a minister from his seat, in connection with any question, at any time, can propose a motion aimed at limiting the debate.