

Proposal for Time Allocation

The hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam talked about obstruction and repetitive speeches in the nice fashion in which he usually delivers his remarks. However, one of the things he said was that free expression cannot be monopolized by a select few. I should like to ask the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam to comment in all honesty on what he feels about the self-discipline of the hon. members for Skeena and Timiskaming who for over two years, by means of obstruction and repetitive procedures, prevented the subject of divorce being considered in this house and caused a great deal of concern to the people affected. I should like to ask the leader of the N.D.P. what his reaction is to two of his own members who made a goodly number of repetitive speeches because of a principle they believed in. Does he think that the time then was monopolized by a pretty select few?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think the house is now getting beyond the limits of the question of privilege that has been raised. I would point out that the hon. member for Medicine Hat has the floor.

● (5:30 p.m.)

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings will contribute to this debate later. The question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Co-mox-Alberni is not valid. The hon. member suggests that his party is advancing proposals which might be accepted by other members. Most of his proposals, however, were advanced in the business committee by hon. members not of the New Democratic party on an occasion more than two years ago. There needs to be no more discussion on the point.

Having disagreed with the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam on one point, I now wish to agree with him on another. The hon. member suggests that the business committee should have been set up a long time ago to consider the allocation of reasonable times for many items of government business. It is unfortunate that under provisional standing order 15A the business committee should have been convened only at a critical stage of a controversial issue. It is unfortunate that other matters have not been referred to that committee.

It can be argued that when the house leaders meet their informal discussions are much the same as those that would be carried on in the business committee. Nevertheless, as far as I know no other item of legislation has been referred to that committee and then

been the subject of a motion. Techniques ought to be developed for sending matters to that committee so they may be discussed and unanimous agreement on allocation of time for various matters may be reached. I say that because when there is a filibuster and debate continues for a long time with arguments being advanced not once but four or five times by the same speaker, an effective means of closure is implemented.

The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) complains that his group has not had an opportunity to discuss all the clauses in Bill C-243. That may be true. Yet his party has taken 13 days to discuss clause 2 without discussing any other clause. The hon. member says that we ought to stand clause 2, not pass it and go on with something else.

Mr. Churchill: Will the hon. member permit me to say something, because I think he has been most unfair? The time the house has spent discussing the bill has not been solely taken up by members of the Conservative party. More than 30 members of other parties have spoken, including members of the hon. member's party.

Mr. Olson: That is correct. We made one speech.

An hon. Member: Two.

Mr. Olson: I am referring to the 13 days spent in discussing clause 2. I have observed that for several days on end only members of the Progressive Conservative party have spoken. The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre gave an undertaking, though he had no right to give it, that there would be no discussion later on clauses 2 and 6 provided parliament could reach the stage where only those two clauses would be left for the next session. He had no right to make such undertaking on behalf of the opposition or even on behalf of his own party. The hon. member's position is false. No member of the house knows better than the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre that if clauses 2 and 6 are not passed during this session they die, that if the bill does not pass it also dies.

There are rules that may restore a bill to the position it once held on the order paper. Should clauses 2 and 6 not be passed, that would be the end of them. Should the bill not be passed, the hon. member knows that that would be the end of it. The hon. member is pretending to be magnanimous by saying that the other clauses will be allowed to pass by