

Privilege—Mr. Broadbent

but spends the past three days not even permitting us to proceed with House business. It is a hypocritical party which is ham-stringing Parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives cannot have it both ways. They pretend they stand for the dignity of Parliament and they want people to participate in a free and full debate when we have over a million unemployed in real numbers, when we have record levels of inflation we cannot get around to dealing with, when we have a six-month-old debate, and when its members exercise what can only be described as the tyranny of the minority over the majority of people collected in this House of Commons. That is unacceptable to anyone who believes in parliamentary democracy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, what concerns me is that a member who has only been here since 1968—many others have been here longer—and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) himself, and his party's constitutional critic, the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp), have said that despite having spent three days at a cost of \$300,000 a day to do nothing, will not stop at this point. No, they are not content with that. They do not want us to have the right to a vote. They have said this process will continue up to the day of the Quebec election. I ask you, Madam Speaker, to count the number of days we will spend sitting here, listening to inane arguments, frivolous questions of privilege and spurious argumentation that any five-year-old in Canada would see through in 30 seconds.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: It is a party which was once led by a great Canadian, Sir John A. Macdonald. But it is responsible for what is happening right now.

I want to come to the second point raised by the House Leader of the Conservative Party yesterday, and which caused me some real concern. There is one position in this House, and it is not the Prime Minister's position, the Leader of the Opposition's or mine, which must have respect, and continuing respect. I refer to your position, Madam Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: We heard it yesterday from that sleazy House leader of the Conservative Party—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: He heard your ruling, Madam Speaker. He got up and he smiled in his unctuous way and said "Far be it from me to question your decision, Madam Speaker." Then he proceeded with an argument, the only logical thrust of which was to undermine the credibility of the Speaker of the House of Commons. That is something this party will not put up with.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, surely at this point in our history the Conservative Party has made its position clear. I do not agree with that position. I know there are serious arguments which can be made in favour of it. I think they are seriously wrong but serious people can make them—

Mr. Clark: Allan Blakeney, Lorne Nystrom—

Mr. Andre: And 65 per cent of all Canadians.

Mr. Broadbent: Allan Blakeney is one of them. The point I want to make, as a Member of Parliament, is that one of the guiding principles and one of the privileges of every member in a democracy—not some kind of autocracy, whether a right-wing regime or otherwise—is that at some point we have the right, as Members of Parliament, to make a decision—for the majority to make a decision.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: I contend that the people of Canada who are out there and are interested in this question also have an interest in other matters. They have concerns about the cost of living. They are concerned about jobs. When they have made their arguments, as they have, and they are understood, and when the government has made its argument, as it has, and it is understood, and we have made our arguments, as we have, which on balance we say are in agreement in principle with the government on this—

An hon. Member: What about the provinces?

Mr. Broadbent: —and when the final argument is considered and cleared up we will stand together at this historical moment.

Surely if we are to maintain respect for this institution—and this is what concerns me—we must know that if we continue on as the Conservatives want us to we will cease to be a democratic institution. I repeat, we have heard it from the Leader of the Opposition and from his party's constitutional critic that they have no intention of allowing us to come to the point at which we can make a decision. They have no intention of allowing us to proceed with House business. They want us to cease to be a democratic institution.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andre: Do you favour closure?

Mr. Broadbent: They want us to perform as if we had a lock on the House of Commons. That is all we are accomplishing with their obstructionist tactics.

I am sure that every Canadian, no matter where he or she lives and no matter on what side of this important issue they are on, if they could witness the behaviour of this House of Commons in the last few days, would be ashamed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!