

Time Allocation

is to limit debate, and I object strongly to the fact that we have to go through this ridiculous exercise.

An Hon. Member: We do not have to.

Mr. Herbert: If the Hon. Members had spoken to the motion, I would perhaps understand why they are now alleging we do not have to go through this exercise. In any civilized democracy, Mr. Speaker, it is generally assumed that the Government has the right to pass its legislation and to pass its programs. The Opposition Members are supposed to bring to the attention of the public their objections to the Government programs, and should try to get the public to force the Government to make changes. That I understand. But, particularly in this Canadian Parliament, which most of us say is modelled on the Mother of Parliaments, Westminster, there is no effort made on the part of the Opposition to come to a mutual agreement to limit debate on a Bill. It is not a matter of how many days. They just say, "We are not going to let the measure pass", thus obliging the Government to bring in the measure to limit debate.

I feel that this House is in disrepute in the minds of the public. I received a call last week from a lady who was angry because the pension cheque of her husband, who was not well, is going to be delayed. But she was blaming the Government. I understand her point of view, and I tried to point out to her, as a Government Member, that our antiquated procedures here are such that the Government, instead of passing its legislation in December, when it wanted, was obliged to come into this new year of 1983, and then had to go through this crazy procedure we have this afternoon of wasting time debating a motion which will bring the issue to a vote on the floor of the House in one or two days' time. The lady, frankly, did not understand. She turned to me and put a question which I found most difficult to answer. She said, "But you are the Government." In other words, she was saying, "Why don't you do something about it?" That is what I want to address my attention to here.

It should not be necessary in a civilized society for us to go through this exercise every time we want to bring a matter to a concluding vote. If Members of Her Majesty's Official Opposition really believe that one day they may form the Government, then they ought to start thinking about changing the regulations of this House. As I said to some friends of mine in the Social Credit Party a few years ago, "Give me half a dozen stalwart MPs in this House and I will tie up this operation so it will never work." They said, "But we don't want to do that because we believe the Government has the right to govern." I said "I'm glad to hear that from a small minority Party." If I can now get that message through to Her Majesty's Official Opposition which always talks about its hopes of forming a Government, I would suggest to them that unless they look at these rules under which we are presently operating, they are going to find themselves in the same position in which the present Government finds itself. It makes absolutely no sense that we should be spending time this afternoon debating a

motion to limit debate when we should be debating, instead, the merits of the Bill.

I also suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the only way we could be debating the merits of the Bill this afternoon is by reaching mutual agreement among the Parties in this House that the matter will come to a conclusion at a specific time. I also suggest that the motive of the Hon. Members of the Official Opposition is somewhat self-serving. They want to go on the record in the House not because anyone is listening, any more than anyone is listening to me right now. They want to go on the record because they want to be able to pass on their comments in their mail-outs to their constituents to illustrate what they have been doing and what their point of view is. We have a way to resolve that. Let us follow the process at Westminster. When there are a lot of Members who want to speak, by mutual agreement they carry on past the normal closing hour until midnight, until two o'clock, until four o'clock in the morning, but the Opposition accepts that when they finish talking at four o'clock, there is a vote and the matter comes to a conclusion.

Unless the Opposition accepts that a Government has the right to govern, and pass its legislation, we are going to continue to operate in the way we have been, having to force through on every individual issue, a debate and an unnecessary vote in order to come to the end of the debate on a particular Bill. The most ridiculous part about this, in my opinion, is when we look back at the operation as it existed last year when we had the ringing of the bells with respect to an omnibus Bill.

• (1540)

The Government may have bowed to some pressure here, but I find it strange that it did not put the three Bills, Bills C-131, C-132 and C-133, in the same package. After all, last year we got approval of Her Majesty's Official Opposition for the six and five program and Bills C-131, 132 and 133 are the Bills which carry out that program. I am not discussing the merits. I voiced my objections to one of those Bills in this House. What I am saying is that, because of the objection last year to an omnibus Bill, we were not able to put those three Bills in one package and pass them in a normal, civilized fashion.

As I look at the way we operate in Canada, I find it difficult to come to any conclusion as to where we are going when we talk about changing the rules in order that the Government may be able to assume its role of introducing its program as it has stated, and we are doing now what was stated many months ago, and come to a conclusion. Let the Opposition speak against the measures. Let the Opposition try to inform the public and, if it wants, let the Government hang itself. That is the attitude of the Opposition in Britain. The Government will have its way and the electorate will decide. Maybe we should do more of that in Canada.

Mr. Young: Why bother having an election?

Mr. Herbert: Why? Because our democratic process says, and the Hon. Member should know, that an election puts in a