

Government Orders

An hon. member: Agreed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Just a moment. There are two different motions. Let us deal with the first one. I am sure the House will agree that the representative of the New Democratic Party will get 40 minutes to speak as will the people from the other parties.

An hon. member: Agreed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That one is agreed.

The other motion which the hon. parliamentary secretary put to the House is not admissible at this time. It can only be done by unanimous consent. It cannot be done on a motion.

Some hon. members: No.

Madam Deputy Speaker: When people talk a little louder I hear very well. The motion is not accepted.

• (1225)

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): I suppose I should say I appreciate the courtesy of all the members of the House for extending my time. As a matter of record, I also consulted the members of the Bloc. They also indicated to me they would have agreed to this motion. I did not have the opportunity to speak to the independent members.

I want to start out by saying how much I have appreciated the opportunity to work with my colleague in the Liberal Party in the brief committee hearings we have had plus other debates on this matter.

While I disagree fundamentally with my colleague from the Liberal Party on position on this issue, the exchange we have shared has been useful in my opinion and I want that to go on the record. I also want it to go on the record that we have a fundamental difference of opinion on this.

The personal relationships I had with the brief subcommittee were important to me too. I have no personal rancour against any of the members I worked with, but I am deeply bitter and disappointed at the Conservative Party and the Conservative government for its handling of this issue, including what is happening today.

The government attempted to avoid massive public discussion on what may be the most important bill in this House in the last 50 years. The subcommittee was told it

would be allowed to hold a few hearings, but there would be no money for advertising of those hearings. After our efforts to get the subcommittee going, we were told by the chairperson of that committee the government would not allocate five cents to advertise to the Canadian people that there would be some brief hearings across this country.

At the same time, the government spent millions of dollars on a referendum on the Constitution that would have changed the political landscape of this country, but it would not spend five cents to advertise committee hearings on a fundamental change of the economic constitution of this country.

To show how ridiculous that position was, I was forced to stand up in this Chamber and deal with a subcommittee's problems in Question Period. The Prime Minister, embarrassed as he was, announced we would be allowed to spend \$30,000 to advertise in Canadian newspapers that we were holding these little hearings.

My colleague from the Liberal Party, the members of the subcommittee and I then rushed to a discussion of how we would spend this \$30,000. We very quickly discovered we had five days to initiate advertising before the first hearings in Vancouver. We had five days' notice to get the ads in only two major newspapers in British Columbia. This is open democracy? This is sharing the good news with the people of Canada?

It is nothing more than crass cynicism by a government that has been drunk with power and has simply no understanding of its basic obligations to the people of this country, absolutely none.

These are the same people who, while they were in opposition, ran up this corridor and attacked the Speaker with the rule books in their hands. These are the same people who sanctimoniously attacked previous governments in this country saying they wanted openness in government. These are the same people I had to beg money from so there would be ads in the paper telling the people we were going to have these quiet little hearings somewhere. Let that go in the record.

Let it also go in the record that at the moment the debate is being called, another political circus is being staged so the media's attention will be drawn away from this Chamber as the government attempts to sneak this bill through.