

Mr. John Evans (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I, too, join in this debate on the imposition of Standing Order 75C. I agree wholeheartedly that it should be imposed. I have been in the House, watched this debate go on and listened to what hon. members opposite had to say. In fact, the hon. member for Annapolis Valley-Hants (Mr. Nowlan) just said that there were 12, 13 or 15 members of the opposition who spoke.

Mr. McDermid: Out of 103.

Mr. Evans: There were 22 members who spoke, two of whom are on the government benches.

An hon. Member: There were three government members.

Mr. Evans: Excuse me, there were three. The Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen), myself, and the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Mackasey). That leaves 19 opposition members.

● (1620)

The reason we did not stand in our places and speak on this bill, C-30, was that we wanted to hear what opposition members had to say. In 12 hours of debate we have now heard everything at least three times. About half-way or two-thirds of the way through that debate I stood in my place and for 40 minutes gave answers to questions raised by hon. members opposite. I answered those questions to the best of my ability and with honesty. I am sure hon. members agreed with that because they complimented me on my efforts. We have answered those questions and if there are additional questions I would be willing and have been willing to answer them. In fact, I did answer supplementary questions put to me by hon. members on this particular bill.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, at a time when we have a new Parliament that has almost one year of backlog material to be dealt with in this House, is this a time to be spending five days, as we have done so far and six after Wednesday, on a bill that is two paragraphs long extending to two pages?

An hon. Member: Involving \$12 billion.

Mr. Evans: There is the backlog of material that has to be dealt with in this House. These are the bills before this House at this time. If we are required to spend five days of debate on this bill, how long is it going to take us to deal with all these bills?

It is quite clear that a filibuster has been taking place and that it would continue to take place. I have been told by hon. members opposite that they have enough speakers to continue for as long as the debate will last.

An hon. Member: Obviously.

Mr. Evans: In other words, the government is being forced into the position of having to impose 75C in order that we can

have the kind of debate we are having today, and that is the truth of the matter.

Having regard to the questions that were asked, hon. members opposite have said that if the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance brought down a budget they would discontinue the debate. I have now heard the hon. member for Annapolis Valley-Hants say, of course, that that only applies to not continuing this particular debate on this motion today and did not apply to discontinuing the debate on the bill itself. I stood in my place last Monday night and gave indications why the Minister of Finance has not yet brought down a budget and why it will be a little while before he is able to bring down a budget. There were two issues. Hon. members opposite know those two issues and, putting all rhetoric aside, have to agree with them.

The first is that you cannot bring down a budget involving revenues and expenditures when one of the major revenue sources and revenue drains facing this government, the energy pricing issue, has not been resolved. If you do not have clear information about those revenues and expenditures, about what will happen to the oil import compensation payments and what is going to happen to revenues that come to the federal government from this area, then a budget is not possible.

The second issue involves the envelope system first conceived by Mr. Andras, who is no longer with us in this House. That system was implemented by hon. members opposite when they were in government. We compliment them for that because we think it is a good system and we are going to continue it. This envelope system requires that ministers understand clearly what are the trade-offs within their various departments, in the envelopes, so as to be able to put forward expenditure plans that reflect the priorities within those envelopes. The ministers are working diligently to see that this is done.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) is working diligently to see that an energy pricing package is negotiated with the provinces and agreed to. When those two things are in place we will be able to bring down a budget. It will be a well-thought-out budget which will deal with the priorities this government has, taking into consideration the objections and concerns of the opposition.

The fact of the matter is, and hon. members opposite have to agree, that the federal government has to continue; it cannot cease to exist as of the end of this month. Gentlemen opposite know that the borrowing authority available to this government cannot last forever, that it will run out at the end of this month or the middle of next month. Hon. members opposite would like to debate this. I can tell them that if they pass the bill at second reading it will go to the committee where detailed questions can be asked and detailed answers given. This is not the place or the time for that kind of debate. We are debating the bill in principle. Is it a principle of hon. members opposite to have the government run out of money