

*Supply*

party ever found it necessary to let the bells ring for so long, in fact paralysing the entire parliamentary system, for the purpose of attracting public attention to the political aspects of one of their claims. This is the context in which today, the Leader of the Official Opposition is presenting a motion to change the Standing Orders of this House. It reminds me a little of the man who pushed his mother under water when she was drowning and shouted: "Help, help! I am trying to save my mother!" That is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition is doing now. For more than two weeks he has been sabotaging this institution in an irresponsible, childish and shameful manner, and now he has the audacity to tell us to save Parliament, modernize the institution and change the Standing Orders. Those, Mr. Speaker, are the circumstances in which the Leader of the Opposition has dared to make his proposals before the House. I listened carefully to his speech here in the House and on the television monitors behind the curtains. I looked for any positive proposals for change that would help prevent the abuse of practices that we have witnessed in Parliament during the last 12 months. There was nothing on limiting the ringing of the bells and there was nothing on the use or misuse of points of order or questions of privilege which occurred during the debate on the Constitution, when the Conservatives used another ruse, another childish and irresponsible subterfuge, to paralyse Parliament. So those are the circumstances, and I feel perfectly justified in speaking as I do. I am not a hypocrite and I prefer to speak frankly. When I see the Leader of the Opposition smiling as he is right now, after having sabotaged the Parliament of Canada for 16 days—he is still smiling, he seems to think it is a joke—and, meanwhile, the unemployment rate in this country is high. We want to create jobs. We are trying to remedy a difficult situation, and the hon. member thinks it is all very funny, after preventing Parliament from introducing practical solutions to the present financial situation; I find it very sad. I think his attitude shows disrespect for Parliament and I think these things should be said.

It is because I am honest that I want to tell him frankly what I really think. However, Mr. Speaker, this will not prevent me from being constructive and positive in seeking ways to modernize Parliament and make it more effective, and I can see that the Progressive Conservatives do not seem interested in this type of modernization and efficiency. They object as soon as the government speaks about efficiency, about introducing bills which will help to solve the problems of this country, such as the bill to amend the National Housing Act, which aims at creating 15,000, and perhaps 40,000 housing units as well as 70,000 jobs immediately. Not so long ago, for seven days, they prevented the passage of this bill at its very first stage. They forced the government to limit debate because they wanted to avoid the vote on second reading. We forced them to take a stand and they had to support the bill. This points to a problem which should be corrected as soon as possible. It reflects a truly destructive and obstructionist style

of opposition, and I believe that if we are to speak about parliamentary reform so that changes can be made as soon as possible, which will allow this institution to better meet present requirements, the official opposition will have to be much more honest; it will have to act in better faith, and the Leader of the Official Opposition will have to abstain from abusing certain rules or the absence of rules, as he has done in the last eight months, to hog-tie this institution and prevent for all practical purposes the government from passing legislation which could help solve the problems which exist in our society.

Mr. Speaker, the bell rang for 16 days for procedural and political reasons. The procedural reasons are easy to understand. One need not be a genius to realize that the bell could go on ringing indefinitely if the whip of the Progressive Conservative Party kept away from the House. This is elementary, but in 115 years, no one had used such a destructive, negative and obstructionist tactic. As we all know, the Progressive Conservatives moved a motion to adjourn the House because they were not satisfied with a ruling of the Speaker that the energy bill was in order. They caused the bell to ring, and then they hid and refused to come to vote, hog-tying Parliament for all practical purposes for over 15 days. Under our procedure, therefore, we were unable to conduct parliamentary business because the official opposition refused to come to vote, and because of this, Parliament was unable to operate for the last two weeks.

The political reasons underlying this motion of the Progressive Conservative party and this tactic which prevented Parliament from operating seem obvious to me. Earlier, on the motions moved under Standing Order 43, on the first day after the end of this strike by the Progressive Conservatives, the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson) moved a motion and began his preamble in these terms: In view of the NDP-Liberal coalition in December, 1979, in defeating the then P.C. government. Those were the first words we heard today after 16 days of idleness in Parliament. Anyone who wants to know the true reasons for the ringing of the bells during the last 15 days can find them in the preamble of the hon. member for Assiniboia. The Progressive Conservative Party has never accepted its defeat in the House in December, 1979, and has never been willing to behave as a responsible official opposition since. This is unfortunate because, after trying to behave as a majority government when holding only a minority, this party is trying to use Parliament and to sabotage its work in order to relieve a continuing frustration which is not only eroding the type of official opposition offered in Parliament, but is also literally destroying the Leader of the Official Opposition who now has a price on his head and whom we shall no longer see after January, 1983. Mr. Speaker, it was important that I first put the motion of the Progressive Conservative leader in this context because these are the facts.

Those who refuse to face this fact are either extremely partisan or would rather not know the truth. The arrangement