

Tabling of Documents

important Bills have been sitting on the Order Paper. Today we are preventing them from being introduced.

I am sure that if the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) were here, he would tell us that he has several very important Bills on the Order Paper, but at least the Bills of the Hon. Member for Burnaby are from 1987. The Bills of the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap are from 1986. All of these Bills are so important and urgent? The definition of urgency according to members of the NDP is not the same as it is in the rest of the country.

● (1220)

Mr. Speaker: I am sure the argument this morning has been very effective and useful. I am sure Hon. Members would want to give the Parliamentary Secretary the courtesy of allowing him to complete his argument.

Mr. Lewis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the interests of making this House work, I advise the House that when I am recognized to reply to questions on the Order Paper I will move the following motion:

That the House do now revert to presenting petitions and continue with the balance of routine proceedings until they are completed, or 1 p.m., whichever comes first.

That would allow my hon. colleagues who have important petitions to present to present them. I will also give a Government undertaking that no government Bills will be introduced under Introduction of Bills, which will allow my colleague with urgent Bills to introduce them; and further, that no government notices of motions will be proceeded with; and that government members will move no concurrence motions.

If I were to move that motion under Questions on the Order Paper, upon which motion we certainly would not need a recorded division, my hon. colleagues would be able to present the petitions which they have all claimed they are ready to present. Therefore, I give notice that I am prepared to do that under Questions on the Order Paper.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I think it would be of great assistance if the Parliamentary Secretary put his proposed offer in writing so that we could look very carefully at exactly what the Government is suggesting before we proceed.

In response to the comments of the Parliamentary Secretary, it is astounding that a person whom the Government has designated as responsible for handling its parliamentary affairs would express such total disdain for the rights of Parliament. It is incredible to hear a Parliamentary Secretary to the House Leader say that Parliament "gets mired down in routine proceedings". You know, Mr. Speaker, as do Members of this House, that those Routine Proceedings are built upon hundreds of years of tradition and precedent designed to protect the rights, not only of Members of Parliament, but of the constituents whom they represent. For a Parliamentary Secretary to say that we are "mired down" is probably the most extreme expression of an authoritarian attitude that I have heard in this House in all the years I have been here.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Axworthy: That says to me that the Government, which has a large majority, has not been able to manage its affairs, is getting frustrated at its own incompetence, and is now lashing out, not only at the press, the Opposition and everyone else, but at Parliament itself. It wants to use the thunderbolt of its own majority to ram things through this House. This is incredible. We have witnessed today a further stage of deterioration in the capacity of the Government to represent any form of civility, any sense of proper behaviour in this House, and any sense of obligation or responsibility as far as Parliament is concerned.

A concession has now been offered. It is interesting that in the last three or four days as the Government has tried to push this Bill through with a large number of parliamentary devices it has only succeeded in seizing up Parliament. We have not been able to conduct the business of Parliament because of the Government's failure in parliamentary intrigue and device. If the Government had allowed matters to pursue their normal course, for debate to continue, amendments to be presented, and routine proceedings to carry forward, we would have made an awful lot more progress than we have until now. It would be unseemly to give any credence to this kind of behaviour and attitude.

It is important that we establish clearly, as Beauchesne's has clearly said, that "the proceedings of the House must be taken up in accordance with the order of business given in the Order Paper". Why does the Government, simply because it has a big majority, think it can overturn those well established rules and precedents? The Government seems to indicate that there is a growing frustration among the Canadian public to get this patent Bill passed. In fact, the representations we have received by way of petitions is so overwhelmingly against the Bill that the Government wants to deny the right of people to have that point of view expressed.

Mr. Speaker: In order to be sure that there is no misunderstanding, the Chair is not concerned with whether this is a drug Bill or any other Bill. It may be that there are differences of opinion among the Parties as to what motivates one side or the other. That is not the issue before the Chair. Before the Chair is the issue of whether or not the Government can, by one device or another, reach Motions in Routine Proceedings. Most Hon. Members have directed most of their comment in that direction. I know the Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy), who knows this place well, would want to assist the Chair in that regard.

Mr. Axworthy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly want to assist. I was only responding to the only argument put forward by the Parliamentary Secretary. The only justification he was able to offer for the motion which was introduced in the House this morning was this demand for some efficiency, from their point of view, in the way in which the system works. I was simply pointing out that in Parliament efficiency is not necessarily the primary objective; democracy and the right of