

*Motion for Concurrence in Report*

the opposition side it is at the report stage that the government either accepts them or rejects them. Alternatively, if in the eyes of the government the bill has been torpedoed, the report stage is regarded as a vote of confidence on the issue on which debate was divided. This is where the cabinet asks itself whether it is responsible and whether the house is going to back it up. In other words, the cabinet is responsible to the house. If the cabinet felt that its proposals did not have the confidence of the house, then it could ask for that confidence.

● (3:50 p.m.)

There has been a *via media* in that the second reading stage has been de-emphasized—I will not say downgraded—and I think this may be to advantage. We are all agreed on eliminating the resolution stage, and it will be of immense advantage to eliminate duplication. It is a simple procedure to move amendments to every clause of the bill which would be voted on in the report stage.

It is here, Mr. Speaker, that the government and its advisers have been rather incautious, I would say, in their proposals. Your Honour will have the task of marshaling these amendments and frankly, with the greatest respect, I do not envy you your task. Amendments could be moved to every clause of the bill, and it does not tax the ingenuity of man in this house to fashion them. Therefore, unless the debate is kept very relevant—and Your Honour knows how difficult that is—I wonder what time will be saved.

We agree that marshalling or maximizing our time is the great problem today. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) laid emphasis on this last night, and I agree with him. But is anything going to be gained by this procedure, particularly if the government house leader imposed his weekly closure? Who is going to be so naive as to suggest, since the government house leader is cutting back on second reading, that if amendments line up before Mr. Speaker one after the other the government house leader would not also wish to restrict debate on them? It would amount to weekly closure.

And this house is to be a place for debate, Mr. Speaker? This simply is not inherent in this particular government proposal. This is the most vicious and dastardly attack upon parliament that has ever been perpetrated. Provisional standing order 15A was bad enough. In fact, it was so bad it was never used. If it is felt that debate has extended too far, then the government must assume its

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]

responsibility. We all know there is a second forum for debate that is not in this house but is in the antechamber where government ministers and the Prime Minister are prone to run to the television camera to do their ministerial second thinking. This sort of discussion is one-sided because no one is there to question them. The Prime Minister has been quoted as saying on television last night that there comes a time in every democratic assembly when debate must come to an end and a decision made. He made that statement here, and no one quarrels with it. But this was the most undisguised red herring that the Prime Minister could ever have dragged up from the bottom of the ocean and brought into this debate. The government just does not have the courage of its convictions. Standing order 33, which under these proposed rules is being continued, was made for this purpose. If the government feels that debate has gone on far too long, then let the government have the courage to bring in closure frontally instead of having the government house leader do it in advance before the debate has even begun.

I agree that closure has to be used if the debate has gone too far, but this can only be ascertained after the debate has got under way, not beforehand. Yet this is what we are faced with. The government house leader has this authority now, and the Prime Minister knows it. In effect, what the Prime Minister is seeking is authority to cut off debate a week before it is commenced in so far as any or all matters on the order paper are concerned, and not only matters on the order paper but also matters before the committees.

Let us suppose that the government had got wind of what had happened in the transport committee and was concerned that it would run into trouble in that committee. They would not have had to put the chairman in hospital or "cut off his head" or "eat him", as they did; all the government house leader would have to say is that the proceedings presently before the transport committee will be brought to an end as of a certain date. Let us say this proposal was made on a Thursday. Once it is voted on he can cut off debate as of the next day, even though the committee may have been going to meet the following Tuesday. That is what is possible under these proposals.

When the Prime Minister makes this fine statement that sounds very impressive, frankly he is just trying to muddy the issue, to distort the facts and to mislead the Canadian people about what is involved here. And I