

S.O. 75c

economic bill becomes terribly important. In that respect, I submit that Bill C-59 is a very important bill and that the government is doing no service to Parliament and no service to the people of this country by imposing closure under Rule 75c. I know the government does not like to call it closure; it likes to call it allocation of time. The President of the Privy Council slipped once yesterday when he called it "limitation of time". In other words, it is closure, Mr. Speaker.

● (1610)

I end with the words I used when I began: this is no way to run the House of Commons of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, we are now dealing with a motion introduced by the President of the Privy Council, intended to limit the debate on second reading of Bill C-59, an extremely important measure providing for the government a borrowing authority of \$14 billion. The proposal for a time limit does not indicate that the government does not believe in that important measure. On the contrary, it is a significant bill but it is the responsibility of the Leader of the Government in the House and President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) to organize and plan the legislative program and the business of the House to manage to get some bills passed during a session. The President of the Privy Council has indicated that he was not very thrilled to introduce this motion in his capacity as government House leader. It is generally agreed that it would be far better to reach a consensus or to resort to provisions under S.O. 75A or even to come to an agreement of the kind which took place, for example, last week when in the space of a few days we disposed of several bills of some significance since one of them amended the Income Tax Act, while another had to do with equalization payments to the provinces. However, when the government House leader and President of the Privy Council reviews the bills which should be considered and passed by this House, there comes a time when he must decide whether he will allow the debate to go on indefinitely, as it seems to be the case with Bill C-59, or will he try to get the other House leaders to agree on a time schedule as he did in this case. However, if there is no agreement, if he cannot get a consensus, he must decide whether he will let the debate go on or limit the speeches. He took that decision to let us have an orderly calendar and to speed up our proceedings in the House and not, as I said earlier, because he thought that the bill was not important or because he enjoyed taking that kind of decision. On the contrary, I think that it is with regret that he took it but it is his duty as government House leader to organize and plan the legislative business of the government.

As I said, Bill C-59 is seeking a supplementary borrowing authority of \$14 billion. Already, on second reading, 24 hon. members have had the opportunity to indicate what their respective party's position is on this issue; more specifically, 19

members of the Progressive Conservative Party have already indicated what they think of this bill seeking a \$14 billion supplementary borrowing authority, and four members of the New Democratic Party have done the same. I feel that when 19 members of the same party comment on a bill, it should be adequate to put forward their party's position on that bill, whether it is for or against it, as well as its reasons for being for or against it.

And I think that because all these 19 members who have received the proper training, who had adequately prepared their remarks, have each spoken for more than the 20 minutes allotted to them, without making any rhetorical comments and abusing the time of the House, we now know all the reasons why anybody could be against this bill. And I think that the same applies to the speeches made by the four NDP members who had carefully prepared their remarks of over 20 minutes duration, who researched their subject to tell us why their party should oppose this \$14 billion borrowing authority, so that they had all the time they needed to indicate why their respective parties oppose this \$14 billion borrowing authority. In any event, as indicated by the President of the Privy Council, this evening, after the vote on the time allocation motion, the debate on the borrowing authority will resume and continue as well on Monday.

In addition, the bill will be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance where, once again, committee members who represent the three parties sitting in the House will have the opportunity to put questions not only to the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) and myself but also to departmental officials on the bill requesting a \$14 billion borrowing authority. Might I also point out that when departmental estimates come up for study each year, hon. members have a chance to put many questions on all aspects of government spending, whether it be those of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Department of the Solicitor General of Canada, or the important and wise expenditures of the Department of the Environment with its fine scientific program, Parks Canada. All those topics and departments can be adequately examined in depth through whatever questions are put, so that not only are the \$14 billion expenditures looked into but also the expenditures involved in the estimates prepared by the government that are subjected to close examination in the standing committee.

All that to say, Mr. Speaker, that during those five days when 19 members of the Progressive Conservative Party and four of the NDP intervened in the debate, it became clear why those two parties oppose the bill granting a \$14 billion borrowing authority. Their reasons were either philosophical or practical. For instance, it was claimed that the amount was too high, that it would burden the country for far too long a time, and so on. Be that as it may, there was time to point out the reasons why passage of this bill is being opposed, to express them without repeating them, because repetition of arguments