

Extension of Sittings

The first thing I want to mention is that all of this was totally unnecessary. No matter how the Government House Leader (Mr. Lewis) handles the Government's business, the Government has the elected right to decide on the order of business. There is no dispute about that. No matter what happens, though, all of us, either individually or collectively, have the right to speak on the mandate under which we are here.

My mandate from my constituents is to get the Government to agree to changes in the legislation that will put into Canadian law, not U.S. law, provisions to protect the people of my constituency and dozens of others in Canada from the bad results of the free trade deal that I and many others think are inevitable. My mandate was to express the views of an obvious majority of my constituents, even the views of those I did not agree with.

I want to say to my hon. friend from Duvernay (Mr. Della Noce) that I listened to his speech and I thought he made an excellent speech. I actually enjoyed it, I really did. I want to remind my hon. friend, since we are discussing a motion about amending the rules, that before he was born, a countryman of his suspended all the rules of the Parliament in Italy. The Hon. Member should talk to the older members of his family about when that happened. All the rules of a democratic parliament under a monarchy in Italy in the 1920s, before the Hon. Member for Duvernay (Mr. Della Noce) was born, were suspended. I hope he will keep that in mind because no political Party, the Government, the Official Opposition or mine have the right or even a mandate to play fast and loose with the rules of Parliament upon which we have all agreed. I would not hold still even if it were my Party doing this. I promise you that, Mr. Speaker. When you play fast and loose with the rules that have been unanimously agreed upon, you are on a slippery slope to a one-party state and a one-party government. I kid you not. I say that in order to ask my colleagues from all Parties to keep that in mind.

• (1910)

I said at the outset that I have been here on a number of previous occasions since the fall of 1968. I have listened for hours while great Members of the Conservative Party have spoken and have voted against what the Liberals were doing. I had to sit and watch the same spectacle last summer, at what is being done now is even worse. The Liberals are condemning the Conservatives for what the Liberals did before. What a spectacle. I

will not use the words "hypocrisy" because none of us are perfect. None of us are pure.

I can remember when the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie) came here in a by-election in 1976. I can remember hearing the Tories rail against the then government of the day, a Liberal Government. They said how terrible it was when closure was brought in. My goodness. In the first place I think my hon. friends, and many of them are friends in this House—

Mr. Horner: Are you afraid of Bob White?

Mr. Benjamin: He is a friend too, especially when I argue with him. When I think of my hon. friends in the Government I would like to suggest to them that they did not, I repeat, did not need to suspend the rules or bring in closure. Some of the fault is on the two opposition Parties as well. But none of this needed to happen. Why, Madam Speaker? I will tell you why. It is because there ain't no deadline.

Mr. Friesen: You would not let us table the Bill.

Mr. Benjamin: The hon. gentleman says that we would not let them table the Bill. We could maybe stop the Tories from doing that for a day, if we are lucky. The Member knows that. I have been here longer than my hon. friend. The whole thing was totally unnecessary because the Government could have just said, "Fine. Take all the time you want", or it could have said "you have to the middle or the end of January". So what. There has already, as I understand it, been an exchange of letters between the U.S. administration and the Government of Canada. If the implementation date is not January 1, but January 31, or February 28 or whatever, so what.

The Government might have been smart to let us run out of gas. The trouble is we found out that the government Members are the ones who have the gas and have the gall to suspend the rules. I exert a word of caution. This is dangerous ground on which we are treading.

I want to return to the whole matter of a mandate which my colleague, the Hon. Member for Kootenay West—Revelstoke (Mr. Kristiansen) mentioned. The mandate that I as an individual Member have and my nine other colleagues from Saskatchewan have is not to be totally ignored whether on the majority side or the minority side. We all have to consider why each of us is here. We must not disregard those who are here for different reasons than I am. I have the greatest respect for the mandate of Members on the Government side. I expect nothing more than the same regard and respect for my mandate.