

Government Orders

In those two days, we spent more than half of our time discussing whether the title of the act should be a referendum or referendums. Just imagine. Do you have any idea how much one day of proceedings in the House of Commons costs? There are about 135 days in a year. Not many of those days are useful ones but there are 135 in all. The budget of the House of Commons is somewhere between \$700 and \$800 million. You can imagine the costs when the House wastes its time. The government did that purposely in order to avoid a debate on important amendments among the 62 that are left.

Later on the Conservative and Liberal members, among others, will vote one after the other on these amendments without having had one minute of debate in the House on those, simply because the government decided to cut off the debate.

You know that the two days of debate will end this evening, and with tomorrow, because the government will again resort will to the same procedure at third reading. Those three days represent one of the shortest periods of time to examine a piece of legislation.

If Canada decides to pass a law to protect small butterflies during the winter it may take ten days in the House. However it is not worth discussing for more than three days a Canadian referendum that everybody opposes, including Mr. Bourassa who said today that he hopes the federal government will not hold a Canadian referendum in Quebec. Moreover, more than half of those three days will have been spent discussing trivialities.

Mr. Speaker, you are a just and sensible man and I wonder if you have the authority to extend the sitting hours this evening, during the whole night if necessary, so that we can keep discussing motions Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8? Come on; this does not make sense. We will not have time to discuss those motions.

As one who worked really hard regarding public financing, among other issues, I would have liked to tell you about those things. I found some interesting things. The Quebec Conservative caucus got involved. The Prime Minister had promised that it would be done before election time. He reneged on that just like he reneged on everything else, and today he uses closure to keep us from talking about this issue.

Mr. Speaker, you listened to me carefully and I wonder if you think that it is fair that the studies in the hands of the government House leader on the issue, among others, of spending limits, of popular financing, and of the application of the charter of rights are not made available to members? What does the government House leader want to hide from us? Where is the public interest in hiding the findings of a study financed with taxpayer's money? What do we want to hide? Why not deposit them on the Clerk's table so that we may consult them? We are not crazy in Quebec. We know how to read. Today's issue of *La Presse* headlines: "A referendum calls for as rigid a framework as an election". The article is by Patrice Garant, a Laval University law professor. He quotes judicial precedents, Mr. Speaker: the Supreme Court of the United States, in 1976, *Buckley vs. Valeo*; and then, a Manitoba case. Unless I'm mistaken, Manitoba is still part of Canada. He mentions the *Bellotti* decision of the Supreme Court of the United States concerning a Massachusetts statute; he then refers to *Mackay*, another Canadian case, and applies the test set out in the *Oakes* decision. Why are we being hoodwinked? Then he comes up with another extremely detailed document, the *Ford* decision.

Do you feel that the supposedly secret studies or documents which the government House leader is deliberately hiding from members would not provide this professor, a political science expert, with greater insight? Is this the freedom recognized by the charter of rights? Is this part of the gag decree? Is it logical for the government to act in this manner? No more so than barring Bloc Quebecois members from the Castonguay-Dobbie committee on the Constitution, the various constitutional conferences, the travelling circus which criss-crossed Canada during three months, or the legislative committee which concluded its work last week and was a monumental farce. No witnesses were called. The whole thing was over in a day and a half, not even two days, barely three to four hours. The whole process was prearranged.

The Liberals, NDPs and Conservatives had agreed beforehand that there would be no legislative committee. The Bloc Quebecois, who oppose this bill, was not given a single seat on the committee in order that they might tell Canadian men and women, and Quebec men and women, what is going on. Some think they can convince the Canadian population, English and French Canada, English Canada and Quebec, by veiling the truth, by some fancy window dressing, by gagging opponents.