

*Time Allocation Motion*

were told that the vote was going to be a free vote. This means that, usually, a vote is not free. There is nothing more stupid in our parliamentary system than this lack of freedom about votes, since it is known in advance that the voting machine will be started on the other side of the House, that it will say yes because the government said so, regardless of the consequences in every electoral district represented by the members on the government benches.

Mr. Speaker, there is no use denying it, it is a fact, that is how it happens here, that is what I have seen for the last eight years. When you are stuck with such a system, the only thing left to do is to try, even then, to force the government to find measures that people will approve, and only those which promote emancipation and development of the whole of the country.

We have no other solution to force the government to change certain things we consider inappropriate or improper; all we can do is talk about it, insist upon it and repeat it so that at some point the government may change because we contend that it must be changed. Striking, the last resource, is the only way workers have in the present system to try to solve their problems.

The parliamentary system forces us to that. That could be remedied however if Parliament were changed. Evidently, each member would first have to recover the basic freedom we fundamentally need if we are to respect and reflect the opinion of those we pride ourselves on representing. But, Mr. Speaker, that would require at least that every vote be a free one. All we need do is get rid of established precedents and traditions whereby no government bill may be defeated. That is why our hon. colleagues on the government side make a point of voting always against their opinions, sometimes against their conscience and against their own constituents. If we were to establish the balance sheet of all these contradictions, we could end up with surprising results.

A free vote, therefore, would be the initial step to take if we want to do away with debates which last unduly. Only then could we be sure that at the time of the question, the result would reflect the opinion of the majority, while we know now that the number of votes in favour of this bill will be that of hon. members of the Liberal party present in the House. The result will not depend on the value of the bill, but on the number of members in the House. That is a question of party strength and not of opinion, which is quite unfortunate. This could be remedied by a free vote. Then, it could be easier to limit the debates if we had what our party has been advocating for a long time, fixed sessions; when we know when the session is beginning and when it is going to end, it is a lot easier to determine within this time frame how long it will take to discuss the government's legislation. In those circumstances, we, from the opposition, would not object to the government setting a well established schedule enumerating the pieces of legislation the government would put before the House. Then, we would know exactly when a legislation would be put before us and we would be a lot less inclined to discuss it at long length, whereas presently we never know what will be put before us the following week, the following day and even the following hour.

Now, all those ambiguous and equivocal situations bring us, that is the government, to try and play tricks on us by

[Mr. Matte.]

rapidly passing controversial bills, and so on. We play hide-and-seek instead of being serious and discussing objectively the intrinsic value of a bill. This is not really serious when we see that it is the way it goes. So, I take advantage of this motion to ask all members of the House to stop some time and set up to change what is wrong in the parliamentary system and sometimes brings the government to use unilaterally what it is agreed to call coercive means to pass a bill. This is not normal. And being serious people, we could remedy this.

To conclude with, I repeat my suggestions: first, we should have a really free vote from each hon. member in this House; second, we should have sessions at a determined date so that the debates are not unduly extended; and third, we should have in advance a determined agenda of the government's intentions with the order they want to follow for the study of the different bills during the session. So we would not need this Standing Order 75C any more which whether we like it or not cannot be accepted by people who are really serious.

**Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques):** Mr. Speaker, it would seem that the debate is starting to turn and transform itself into a general debate on our Standing Orders, the procedure, the rights of the members to speak about democracy, and finally all our institutions. To my mind, those who are endeavouring to steer the debate in that direction are merely trying to create a smokescreen to hide the real issue. And that is, that 47 speakers have already spoken for 19 hours on a two-clause bill. Which brings up this question: Is it not enough that 47 hon. members spent 19 hours speaking on two clauses? My answer is this: That is quite enough. And that is the first reason that led the government to have recourse, for the first time, I believe, to Standing Order 75C.

The other reason is that no other agreement was reached between the parties of the opposition and the government. A while ago we heard the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) say that we could have come to an agreement. But that is crying over spilt milk. Although it has been impossible to come to an agreement for at least two weeks, we know that House leaders are meeting to discuss this topic after systematically refusing to give at least summary indications to the government House leader as to whether or not it would be possible to come to an agreement.

Having precluded all possibility to come to an understanding, they now come to the House to say: "If only the government were not so rigid and did not demand the implementation of Standing Order 75C! They even go so far as to say: If the government had not been so stupid, we could have reached an agreement. If this could have been done, it would have been before, but that did not come to pass. Now clause Standing Order 75C is being implemented and it seems to me that it is very useful. I contend that hon. members of the opposition who are against it and who are trying to put democracy on trial should conduct opinion polls in their constituencies just as we do on the government side of the House, they would then realize that the people have had debates which drag on and on in the House of Commons, and that they, the taxpayers deem inefficient.