

they do have some ability. But no: we find they are doing no better when they are down in the poll, either. So one can only assume that no matter whether they are high in the poll or low in the poll, they suffer from basic incompetence.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Reid:** I have gone back over the ground to look at how Her Majesty's opposition have used supply days to present their alternative policies, their program to the House of Commons and to the country, to see how they choose to use their time. The hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) castigated me last Monday for being a supporter of the "parliamentary sausage machine" approach. I have never made such a statement and I do not believe it. I have always argued that we should organize our time so as to be able to debate things of importance. One of the frustrations I have always felt has arisen because of the lack of courage of the opposition when it come to debating the issues of the day, since they control the only free time in the House of Commons through supply days; and they have plenty of supply days, far more free days than the government has, with its legislative program, to get through.

Let us look at some of their motions. There was one by the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) in which he moved:

That the House urge the government to discontinue its propensity to act in secret and without respecting the generality of the foregoing condemns its failure to provide for an open, public discussion of future Canadian trade policy and to report to the Canadian people on its policy and progress respecting GATT negotiations.

Then there was another. The hon. member for Rocky Mountain (Mr. Clark) moved:

That this House vigorously protest the manner in which it has been deprived of a genuine role in the discussion of estimates, fiscal and monetary policy, objects to the secrecy of economic studies and projections—

**An hon. Member:** You could not appreciate how important that is.

**Mr. Reid:** Mr. Speaker, when one looks at what Her Majesty's Official Opposition has been doing, one must ask: Have they been dealing with matters of substance? Not on your life! They have preferred to deal with matters of procedure. They would prefer not to deal with matters of substance. They would prefer not to deal with the problems facing this country. Let us be fair while we are saying these things. I exempt the NDP from that remark because they at least have the courage of their convictions and are prepared to debate their policies and put forward alternatives. But that does not apply to the official opposition.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** Utter bilge.

**Mr. Reid:** Mr. Speaker, the House leader for the Conservative party talked a great deal about how parliament ought to operate. I dare say that if the day should ever come—and I hope it will not—when he is the government House leader, he

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will make precisely the same kind of speeches that House leaders make from this side, mainly because the government does have the duty to put forward a legislative program.

I want to urge the House leader for the Conservative party to consider the operations of the legislature in Ontario. It is inconvenient for him because they do not sit as much as we do; they sit much less than we do but they pass twice as many pieces of legislation. I do not hear the Liberal or the NDP opposition there complaining about being gagged or about not being able to make their points, or complaining that the government will not allow them to speak. They have learned to live and to adapt. That is something which this House of Commons has not learned.

The House leader for the opposition was eloquent on the matter of the status of the Manitoba legislature. He does not seem to realize how things work in the west. I suppose that is not unusual, considering he is a good eastern Ontario lad. Salaries are limited. Members out there must make a living. They sit in the legislature on a part-time basis. For the same reason, sessions are very limited. The amount of legislation which is presented is limited. All these factors make discipline imperative.

But what do we see in the House of Commons? We have members who are paid full-time so they are here all the time, they do not have the discipline imposed on them of having to earn outside incomes. The sessions here are not limited; we sit for 180 days. We sit too long and we have an average legislative load of about 80 bills per year. We are not going to make it this session because we have not been able to perform. Maybe the hon. member is correct; perhaps we ought to go to the Manitoba system. Maybe we ought to slash the salaries of members of parliament and go back to the old system. If members had to earn their living outside, they would certainly pay a great deal of attention to the business which had to be done and would not waste time in the way time is wasted today both in the House and in committees.

● (1700)

I just want to raise one further point, Mr. Speaker. It has been said by almost every speaker that the House of Commons is under attack. I believe that institutions have to adapt to what is going on in the real world or they will be cast aside, left behind, and deservedly so. I feel that at the present time the House of Commons, with the kind of attitudes we have and the kind of approach that parties are taking, is an institution which is not capable of serving the Canadian people in the 1970s.

Since November 15 we have had a new situation in Canada; we have not had a debate in the House of Commons. The opposition parties have not been prepared to use one of their supply days; they have preferred to avoid the issue. I do not know why they have preferred to avoid it, but when some happening of that considerable magnitude does take place, one would expect there to be a debate in the House of Commons. We have not had that debate. The government says it cannot