

Business of the House

mittee will agree that Standing Order 75B was put forward as a compromise between the two positions. Shortly after it was brought before the House, the salient feature of the Standing Order seemed to be the fact that the majority proposed in 75B did not include the government. Many since then, both in the House and outside, have said that, theoretically, the absence of the government from that majority envisaged in 75B makes the rule unworkable. I disagree, Mr. Speaker, and I want to say to the House that, from my understanding of the proceedings of that committee and the spirit which governed that committee, if that rule had been drafted any differently the debate on it in the House would have been even more acrimonious than was the case. I believe that this rule is being put forward in this taxation debate in a most exemplary manner and shows the will of Parliament. We have not come to the point yet at which we are prepared to accept the kind of time allocation rule adopted by the British Parliament. Nor have we come to the point at which, as in Australia, an officer of the House is responsible for negotiating all the timing of debates. The Canadian Parliament has moved slowly; at least, however, it has taken a step by introducing rules 75A, 75B and 75C. It is fortunate for Parliament and the country that the rule is being first invoked on such an important measure of such broad scope.

The most significant feature of the rule, and I want to draw this to the attention of the public, is this. If the House leaders of the opposition parties want to frustrate the government, they may be able to do so by agreeing unanimously among themselves on how long to debate a measure and thus make up the majority stipulated under 75B and put forward a proposal for time allocation in that respect. The significant part about what has happened has probably been missed by a great many of the public and the media, and I want to stress this now. The most important feature of this entire debate is to be found in the fact that the two smaller opposition parties, the New Democrats and the Créditistes, in addition to being opposed to passage of the bill for their own reasons and principles, have been even more opposed to the proposition brought forward by the official opposition. Far from being in any way united with the official opposition, the smaller parties are diametrically opposed to what the official opposition has put forward in seemingly good faith. That proposal, I say, was never put forward in good faith. It was never, at any time, more than a sham designed to bring this debate to the ground.

It is significant in that regard to remember that several days ago, before any talk of time allocation had arisen with respect to this measure, the Leader of the Opposition was prepared to come before this House with a text. He made his speech later in the day before the media. I give him due credit for wanting to make it in the House. He could not. Hon. members will recall the exact day, because that was the day when the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) moved concurrence in the report of the Indian Affairs Committee and it was not possible for the Leader of the Opposition to make his speech that afternoon. That day his remarks were made to the media. He suggested that closure would have to be invoked on the bill and he said that when there had been no such discussion. That was a prepared statement, made on the

[Mr. Jerome.]

very same day that his representatives, in negotiations, put forward what they now call an intelligent proposal to split the bill. They knew it would never be accepted. They knew it could do nothing less than destroy the negotiations. It was a stall and a shameful sham that they put before this Parliament.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Jerome: The commentary on that need not come from our side of the House, Mr. Speaker. A much more elegant and eloquent commentary came from the leader of the NDP when he refused to support the official opposition. It came from the leader and members of the Créditiste party when they refused to accept that proposition. Mr. Speaker, that was responsible conduct on the part of two of the opposition parties in this House. Since they did not use the rule to frustrate, I submit that they recognize that the government has the right and the responsibility to govern through Parliament, that legislation after it has been debated must come to a vote. They could try to stop all this if they wanted to; however, they have refused to associate themselves with the sham put forward by the official opposition. I therefore say that there is no difficulty here. The rule has a safeguard. It stands there as a credit to the smaller opposition parties. What we shall bring in is not closure but a reflection of the will of this Parliament, a will which is in favour of intelligent government planning rather than useless procrastination, of logical procedure and government decision rather than the kind of useless delay, frustration and filibuster that seem to have been the tactic and intent in this debate of the official opposition.

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, in rising to take part in this historical debate on the government motion to introduce closure may I say at the very beginning that I have been disappointed in the strength of the arguments put forward by government members and I was particularly disappointed by the speech of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) who undoubtedly must be under a great deal of strain. He has seen true examples of Liberal arrogance in Newfoundland and no doubt he sees shades of that arrogance become ever more evident in the federal Parliament. No doubt that was getting under his skin and that was why he was not himself today. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) made a weak defence of the government's action in this regard. I will deal with his speech later.

Before saying more may I correct something raised by the hon. member for Sudbury (Mr. Jerome). He said we should get to the position in which we can program our legislation. How can the government program legislation when it keeps bringing in amendments? We are told that the government will introduce more amendments. Why did these amendments come about? They came about as a result of debate and argument, that is to say, as a result of concerted efforts by all members of the House of Commons. We argued in support of changes and we got changes. We dealt with 190 pages of a 707 page bill. The government realized we were making too much sense. They must have said, "We cannot keep introducing more and more amendments."

Mr. Osler: You could not sell that to your constituents.