

### *Energy Supplies*

I think all of us sitting in the House will recall that either tomorrow or on the next sitting day we will be debating a bill regarding national referenda. The one reason I mention this is that it will be another bill which has the effect of allowing for referenda affecting the very constitution of our country in which again this government has demonstrated its suspicion of parliament and of the parliamentary process by severely limiting the amount of time that parliamentarians, members representing the people of Canada, will have to debate the fundamental and important issues of our country.

What is this government trying to do? Is it trying to make parliament irrelevant? Is it trying to prejudge every circumstance and saying that from now on "Big Brother is going to look after you"? Is that the mentality of this particular group of people who now govern our country?

I know the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Breau) will have an opportunity to speak because he is always brought in. He is a parliamentarian, I will say that. He is here in the House of Commons and he has heard us. I would be interested in hearing what he has to say about this restriction because I know that in his heart of hearts he will not be able to stand in his place with any amount of seriousness and support the provision in clause 11 restricting the right of parliamentarians to deal with this legislation or with this order under the legislation. Under this legislation, before we know the nature of the problem, all of a sudden we will be told we can only debate it for three days. Is this a wise decision?

I want to point out, in case there is any doubt in the minds of anyone hearing or reading this debate, or in fact looking in on us this afternoon, that there is a provision within our rules allowing the government to impose closure on any debate in the House. In case anyone in the House or anyone reading or listening to the debate is uncertain of this provision in our rules, I want to point out that we have Standing Order 75 under which any minister of the Crown may stand in his place and move a motion to the effect that there will be a limitation placed on debate of any business in the House. After a couple of preliminary steps have been taken, that motion to limit and curtail debate in the House in accordance with the amount of time specified by the minister is then considered for two hours and a vote is taken.

In other words, to all intents and purposes the government of the day has the ability, if it thinks it is politically expedient to do so, to limit and curtail debate under our rules. So why does the government now find it necessary to bring in this provision under subclause (4) of the bill, which is the subject of the amendment of my colleague, the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham, which prejudices every issue that will come before us? The government now have the power to curtail debate, so why are they so anxious to prejudge all issues? Is this the mentality of the government? I will not suggest that this is their program, but why, I ask you, is the government prejudging every issue we are going to have in terms of national emergencies in this country relating to energy; and why do they give parliament only three days in which to debate this matter? What is the explanation and

[Mr. Hnatyshyn.]

where is the minister who should explain to us that provision in the bill? I can only suggest that it is the mentality of the government now—

**Mr. Paproski:** And of the minister.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** I am very disappointed that the minister takes this attitude on a matter of such importance. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that if the minister really wanted to come to terms with this legislation he would have a different provision in this clause. He would have guidelines to define a national emergency in the most specific terms possible.

Second, I want to bring to the attention of the House another element of the bill which causes me a great deal of concern. One of the complaints that one hears in terms of legislation is against the growing tendency of this government to bring in legislation that has a very arbitrary element. What concerns me about this bill, and about this clause which is the subject of the amendment, is that it gives the government wide arbitrary powers in terms of the allocation of petroleum and petroleum products in our country for an unlimited period of time. Because while clause 34 of the bill provides that the order under clause 11 gives the power of allocation to the board set up by the federal government, if it wants to extend that power at the end of the 11 months period, all it has to do to keep it on an indefinite and ongoing basis is to reissue an order in council at the end of the three months period, put it before parliament for three days, and they are back in business again.

● (1640)

That is a very legitimate objection to this particular procedure in the bill, and it is why I support wholeheartedly the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham.

The restriction we put in this bill now has no relevance to what might happen in the future. Perhaps a debate will come forward on a national energy emergency which will require only one day of debate, no debate or unanimous consent. On the other hand, perhaps there will be circumstances in terms of a national energy emergency which will require, in the interests of the government of the day, the fullest possible discussion. Why is this arbitrary three-day period being put in the bill now? Does the government not understand in terms of this kind of legislation that we, as parliamentarians and representatives of different parts of Canada, might be able to assist the government to deal better with a national energy emergency? Does the government not see that alternative? What type of help will the government receive under this procedure, as arbitrary as it is? What type of assistance will the government receive from parliament? That tells the lie of this particular piece of legislation. It demonstrates as much as anything the fact that the government reflects its fear of parliament in this piece of legislation.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Order, please. I regret to inform the hon. member that his allotted time has expired. He may continue with unanimous consent. Does the hon. member