

Allotment of Time for Bill C-11

matter which of those parties is in power, it is always the same thing.

I for one believe that neither is better than the other. I heard the representative for the Progressive Conservative party cry like an offended maiden against the closure motion. This is quite ridiculous. They had ample time to introduce amendments, but did not choose to do so. Suggestions they made, but amendments they forgot to introduce. I feel that if we are to proceed in a responsible way during the three remaining days, we should be thinking of bringing down amendments, at least to show the Canadian people we are making positive suggestions to the government, we really want to improve the legislation. And if the government turns them down, they will probably be treated as they deserve next year. Mr. Speaker, such are my views in this brief closure debate. This is the second closure motion we have been having these last two weeks, and I hope we will not be confronted with a third one on the same bill at the third reading stage.

● (1622)

[English]

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I should like to continue with the thoughts left with us by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) about the way in which business is conducted in this House. Those of us who have watched the House of Commons in operation over a period of years, and seen the transformation that has occurred, can only agree with the hon. member when he suggests that serious consideration should be given to making the rules of this House more responsive to the circumstances of the legislation which appears before us from time to time.

The fact that we are debating this kind of motion under 75C is, I think, a reflection of the mismanagement of this government and of the way in which the cabinet, almost uniquely in the history of Canadian politics, has managed to bungle its way through the affairs of the House of Commons. When I say that, I am not sure that they do this without some motive behind their approach to the House of Commons, for it is not a very well kept secret that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the leader of this "great" government across the way, is a man who resents the House of Commons, resents involving himself in debate in the House of Commons, and resents the fact that he has to put any programs which he wants to make into law before the House of Commons.

Therefore, the Prime Minister accedes to the actions of ministers of finance who bring forward bills emanating from budgets brought down months before. We have examples where budget bills are brought forward six months, or, in the case of Bill C-11, more than six months after the budget has been presented in the House.

What have we heard from the government side, Mr. Speaker? We have heard cries of agony and concern that "if we don't get this bill through immediately, or tomorrow or the next day, the business community will not know where they stand and this will be the fault of the opposition". The

[Mr. Laprise.]

backbenchers and colleagues of the government cannot see the expression on the face of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) as he has sat through the debate on the bill in committee of the whole, whereas we on this side can. I have never seen anyone go through such anguish and express such dislike for the process of committee of the whole as the Minister of Finance. To those of us on this side of the House he was completely ill at ease and ill-prepared to deal with any suggestions and questions from members on this side of the House, or to defend a piece of legislation brought forward by his government. Since the last budget was not his, I understand his apprehension and concern at defending it.

We might get some indication of the government's motivations in this matter, Mr. Speaker, if we examine what happened in committee of the whole. The government has talked about having a full debate on economic matters. We have before us a bill which puts into effect provisions which were set forth first in the budget of last March. We went into committee of the whole on Bill C-11 for one minute on November 24. On November 25 and November 28 we spent approximately five hours debating the bill in committee of the whole. We then had an approach from the government side to enter into discussions pursuant to Standing Order 75B. After a mere five hours of discussion in committee of the whole, the government was thinking in terms of bringing in an agreement under Standing Order 75B. Having discussed the possibility of an agreement, the government is then entitled unilaterally to bring in a motion under 75C, and this after a mere five hours of debate on a bill containing over 200 pages.

Some of the provisions of the bill we agree with, but we have serious concern about many others. Not only are we concerned at measures in the bill; we are concerned at the absence of many other measures. Due to the government's bungling and mismanagement, since the budget was brought down in March there was a hiatus in time before further action on the bill was taken, rather than the budget debate following the normal course and the bills being introduced thereafter.

The government wails and complains about the fact that there is so much repetition in debate. The fact of the matter is that to avoid repetition, the government should put their house in order and bring their business before the House in a logical manner so there is some relationship between ways and means and supply and we do not have to dissect and bisect our consideration of budgetary matters. The government should show it is capable of governing the country, instead of being a bunch of bungling—the only appropriate word I can think of—incompetents.

● (1632)

What do they do? They sit back and say we should get this bill through because the businessmen and chambers of commerce want us to give immediate attention to this matter. Anyone who is concerned with business—and every accountant—knows that this government, with a majority, will carry the provisions in due course. Is that any reason to thwart the legitimate representations of the representatives of the people