

Northern Ontario Pipe Line Corporation

hon. member for Rosetown-Biggar, rose in his place and uttered words to this effect, "Feeling as I do about this legislation and having hostility to it, I am justified in using any means within the rules to block the legislation".

I put that to you again, Mr. Chairman. He said in effect, "We are justified in using any means within the rules to block the legislation". I want to put this question to you because I think it is fundamental to this issue. If it is fair for the opposition to use any means within the rules to block the legislation, is it not equally fair for the government to use any means within the rules to put the legislation through? I put it in another way. If it is proper for the opposition to use every means within the rules to block the legislation, can it be improper for the government to use every means within the rules to put the legislation through? I think it is fundamental that, in point of fairness, if it is open to the opposition to use the rules to block the legislation, it must be open to the government to use them to put the legislation through. If the public of Canada know the attitude that has been taken by the opposition on this matter they will realize the fairness of what I say.

Mr. Dinsdale: When did we debate clause 1?

Mr. Carrick: Did I not explain that to you? If you do not mind, I did not interrupt you. Now you have made closure the issue in this election. You should give me the opportunity to answer you.

Mr. Dinsdale: There is no election yet.

Mr. Carrick: It is a fairly shabby trick. I was saying, Mr. Chairman, that people who understand the situation know that these rules are designed to give the minority, as well as the majority, the opportunity to debate issues; but the rules are also designed so that a minority cannot obstruct legislation and prevent the government from putting legislation through. That is exactly why the closure provision is in the rules.

There has been some misunderstanding on the part of the public as to exactly what closure is. If they knew there were four stages of a bill their views might be different. If they knew that there is a debate on the resolution stage, there is a debate on first reading—

Mr. Knowles: Second reading.

Mr. Carrick: On second reading; thank you. There is a debate when the matter is referred to the committee of the whole house and a debate on third reading. Closure may be applied on any of those four occasions, but ordinarily debate is allowed on all four.

[Mr. Carrick.]

What happened in this case? The question is, have the opposition had a fair opportunity to debate these issues? Let me take you through the dates. We will start with the week of May 14; I shall skip the two or three days that preceded that, when there were blocking resolutions put through designed to prevent this matter from coming before the house. I shall start with the 14th, when the resolution was introduced by the Minister of Trade and Commerce. We had four days during that week when the whole issue could have been debated. In the week beginning May 21 we had five days; in the week beginning May 28 we had five days. Thus we had 14 days, beginning with May 14, when this bill could have been debated. We will probably have two or three more days after this week, which will make a total of close to 20 or 21 days.

I tried to make an estimate as fairly as I could of the amount of time that was spent during those first two weeks, the nine days. I went through *Hansard* and I eliminated the time taken on questions on the orders of the day and all that sort of thing, and I found to my own satisfaction that approximately 50 hours of time were allotted in this house in the first nine days. Of that 50 hours, 18 hours were taken up with what I call blocking resolutions. The time of the house was taken up on matters in which there was no opportunity for anyone to discuss the merits of the pipe-line bill. There were 32 hours during that time when there was an opportunity to debate the pipe-line bill.

Probably it requires some explanation of why I say there were 32 hours to debate the pipe-line bill. I want to take you back to what has happened in this house. This issue has been converted into an issue of closure, and the pipe line aspect has taken a subsidiary position. That is not accidental. As a result of that, a large part of the 32 hours was devoted to discussing not the pipe line but the closure aspect of this procedure.

An hon. Member: Whose fault was that?

Some hon. Members: Yours.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Brown, Essex West): Order.

Mr. Dinsdale: Who invoked closure?

Mr. Carrick: If the opposition had been in any way desirous of debating this bill, is it reasonable to suppose that they would not have accepted the offer of the Prime Minister? The Prime Minister said that if you would sit Wednesday night and Saturday as long as you wished, if you wanted that much more time to debate the bill, you could have it.

Mr. Nowlan: Was he not generous?