

Government Orders

There are many other matters that could be mentioned. I do not even know where the implementation agreement is. Is the bill we will be debating after passing Bill C-133 the implementation agreement that was supposed to be here as a condition precedent before this bill was to be ratified? There are different elements of the ratification processes for Parliament, not for the Inuit who have had their ratification and their votes. That is something I wondered about. Perhaps we can deal with it in Committee of the Whole.

I give compliments to the minister because it has been a trying experience. I have not shared a lot of the general criticism that the minister has had in his department, because it is a very tough department. I frankly think he has handled it fairly well with all the difficulties of not just this bill but of many other matters.

I am very saddened he felt it necessary to speak in the ear of old jack hammer government House leader or jackboot House leader, the member from Calgary or from wherever. He invoked Standing Order 78(1) to cut off debate on something of such magnitude when we should have been singing hosannas as we found out more about the details of the agreement.

I think we could move it along to Committee of the Whole because of the process and because I feel so strongly about the process regardless of the subject matter. You are indicating, Mr. Speaker, that my time is almost up. I hope I am here to say no, as perhaps my friend from Beaver River would have done, when this bill is called for second reading. I feel strongly that this was the wrong tactic to use on something so fundamentally important for the people affected. It certainly is a poor reflection of the state of this Parliament. The sooner we can have an election and have a variety of parties in the House, the sooner we will not have the conspiracy of silence, the Official Opposition and the NDP agreeing with a government that they usually condemn every day.

Ever so often on a Friday afternoon they get in bed with them and commit political incest. That is what the opposition parties have done. I do not want to hear them protesting any more about allocation of time when they happen not to like it.

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I certainly respect

and have listened carefully to the comments of my colleague from Annapolis Valley—Hants on this issue.

The clock is running under the provisions of the motion adopted earlier this day under Standing Order 78(1). However this would be the appropriate point at which to respond to the concern the hon. member has expressed about the shortness of time.

This land claim agreement has been under negotiation for about the same length of time the hon. member has sat in the House. Perhaps he has not been here quite that long. In that period he has witnessed many debates on aboriginal issues and has seen the passage of important land claims legislation in the past.

• (1300)

The first point I would submit is that it would be a tragedy if Parliament could not complete the work begun so many years ago, in particular given the will and the dedication not only of the TFN and the Inuit people but of the territorial government and the federal government to settle this matter now.

I understand the hon. member's concern about the shortness of time, but the life of this Parliament is very short and there is also important business to be transacted in the next few remaining days. With the co-operation of the two official opposition parties, the majority of the members in this House has expressed the will to have this piece of business done.

While I respect the view of the hon. member I would point out it was three years ago on April 30 that I signed the agreement in principle. All members of the House through parliamentary committees have had a chance to follow the development of this legislative package. I appeared before the standing committee in the month of February and was questioned extensively. Some members present were there for over three hours while we went through the elements of this agreement.

The Inuit ratified the agreement last November. Drafting and language translation were required, but I must point out to the hon. member that it was only on Tuesday of this week that the final overlap matter was resolved with the co-operation of some members of the House. It was only last Tuesday that it was possible for the Prime Minister to sign because there was a matter before the courts until three weeks ago.