

Finally, Bill C-62 provides some authority for the minister. This gives me an opportunity as a new member of Parliament to invite the House to go further and have more confidence in the government. In my opinion, this would add to our seriousness and our effectiveness. I am astounded that some of us act as defenders of our institutions, of the authority of these institutions, and respect nothing when speaking. I am also surprised that the legislation must be such that the statesmen, the representatives of the people, have to sacrifice all their authority in favour of overly powerful public servants. Afterwards, this situation is deplored. We must wonder about this and confirm the credibility of statesmen, their ability to administer and take into account the real needs and the talents of the established authority, as well as their authority and ability to make decisions, and finally, we must confirm the initiative of able individuals, which is too often destroyed by bureaucracy.

And here, I wish to call on all members of the House to regain the required effectiveness of our problem-solving capacity. The question that I ask myself is this: Can we serve Canadians, are we representatives? If so, whom do we represent? Is it possible to represent them? Our people have needs and, because of Bill C-62, I have the impression not only of being aware of the needs of a certain number of voters, but of giving them a completely practical answer. And I know that members on this side of the House share this feeling and wish to proceed by stages while taking into account the whole political, economic and social reality.

● (1550)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): Order, please. Is the hon. minister rising on a point of order?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, there have been some discussions among the various parties in the House. I should like to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) in particular for his kindness in agreeing to give up some of his time this afternoon so that we can conclude this debate today. If there is unanimous agreement among the parties I would certainly appreciate it if we could conclude debate today. Once more I should like to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, there is certainly no doubt about our position. If it is necessary, we concur in that. I should like to know if it is agreed—and I address this question to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) through you, Mr. Speaker—that we should also proceed with that other piece of legislation, the Petroleum Administration Act, which is to come from the Senate. Is that part of the understanding?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It has already been made clear that I am prepared to surrender the time that was to have been spent on my private member's bill, C-249, for the purpose of finishing Bill C-62.

With respect to the other question, the answer is a conditional kind of yes. I have sent a message to the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) and provided he gets here while the Senate amend-

Old Age Security Act

ments to Bill C-32 are under discussion, that will be satisfactory. It is not far from his office and I expect him momentarily. At any rate I am prepared to give whatever part of the private members' hour is necessary for either or both of these pieces of legislation to be passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): The House has heard the suggestion of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde). Is it agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, it is the second time such a situation occurs in the House on a Friday afternoon. In other circumstances, your humble servant was the one who agreed to yield his time on private members' business to allow the passing of important legislation.

I therefore congratulate the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) for having enabled the hon. member for Bellechasse to express a few ideas in the course of the consideration of that important bill.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): You are very kind.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Thank you very much. I gave the minister my word I would be brief, however, I want to discuss seriously the principle of the bill which I consider as very important. In fact we know some aspects of the bill are excellent while others are not so good.

To follow on the remarks of the previous speaker, I would say, about the officials who draft bills, that they are extraordinarily talented. They manage to put in bills some very good provisions and slip among them not so good ones. So we find ourselves in a difficult situation. If we want to discard the not so good we must discard the good ones. If we accept the good ones we must take the others.

It is for that reason that I ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare to kindly agree to bring in amendments when this bill is considered in committee, particularly with respect to the term "spouse". What does that mean? I quote from the definition of the bill:

"spouse" in relation to a pensioner includes a person of the opposite sex who has lived with the pensioner for three or more years where there is a bar to their marriage or at least one year where there is no such bar and the pensioner and that person have publicly—

—publicly, how many times, that we do not know—

—represented themselves as man and wife;

Mr. Speaker, I find it quite extraordinary that a serious legislation should sanction for all practical purposes the community life of a man and a woman and should determine that they become spouses without being married. I find that terrible. I think it is a very serious hitch when one considers what the family and family rights must be. I think it is a very bad example to give young people. We meet young people, I have lots of them, and I know what they talk about. When you listen to them, when you talk with them, when you touch on the question of family life, marriage, they are somewhat reluctant, and for all sorts of reasons. Yet, when they look at what we do, you cannot blame them because we are adults, responsible people, and