

Time Allocation

I now want to deal, if I may, with the question of time allocation. It is quite obvious to everyone in this House that there is a difference between debate for the purpose of examining an issue and the filibustering which is going on now. There is a difference between debate to allow public opinion to formulate—which is what we did with the White Paper, second reading debate and committee study—and pure delay and filibuster. We put this motion forward with the feeling that this particular Bill has had all of the discussion necessary. I feel that it has had all the discussion necessary and that it is very, very vital to representation.

● (1110)

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to predict what we will hear from the Opposition in the next hour and 50 minutes. I would like to remind the House of what happened when we moved time allocation on the employment equity Act and of some of the things that were said by the Opposition during that debate with regard to what the Government was doing. Opposition Members used inflammatory terms such as “howls of outrage” and “guillotine”. They said that they had only had a few days to debate the Bill. They said: “Our Party has had only 14 Members speaking on this Bill”. There were many other words of the same character used.

It is important to realize that on the day allocated for the final debate on the Bill, debate was to close at 4.45 p.m. and *Hansard* of November 21, 1985, shows that debate closed at 4.30 p.m. because the Opposition did not put up any more Members to speak. After having complained about time allocation, the Opposition could not fill its roster of speakers for a full day of debate. That is important to remember because we are going to hear a lot of complaints about how we are choking off debate, but when it comes to debate they do not have the bodies here.

Lest you think this does not happen often, let me refer you back to December 5 when the Government introduced time allocation on the Income Tax Act. I would like to read from *Hansard* of December 5 some of the comments made by members of the Opposition. The Member for Saint-Henri-Westmount (Mr. Johnston) said:

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I and my colleagues in the House are amazed that the Government would seek to terminate the discussion in this House on the principles of this legislation.

He said that they wished to debate the changes in the House. The Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) said that they wanted to debate whether or not it is necessary for the Government to bring in time allocation. All of the Members complained about time allocation. Referring to the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. MacKay), the Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) said that the Minister “wants to cut, cease, abort the debate after only 50 Members have had a chance to speak”. The Member took issue with the figures of our Whip and said that only 11 per cent of all MPs had spoken on the issue.

The Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) spoke and said that he considered that the Government had phenomenal

gall to do this. The Member for Laval-des-Rapides (Mr. Garneau) said:

Mr. Speaker, for a sixth time since the Government came to power, it is using its overwhelming majority in this House to gag opposition Members.

He said that that is truly a shame for democracy. He spoke about having had only nine hours of debate.

I want to refer you back to eleven o'clock on Monday morning of this week, Mr. Speaker. At that time the final day of debate on this Bill on which everyone claimed we were choking off debate, was called. What happened at that time, Mr. Speaker? At 11 a.m. the Income Tax Act was called under Orders of the Day. What happened as reported in *Hansard* is as follows:

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The question is on the amendment.

Since not everyone was here at that time I will explain what happened. The Opposition voted against the amendment, but did not even have five Members in the House to call for a recorded vote. We then moved to the main motion which everyone wanted to debate. We called for the question on this important Bill which the Opposition had not had enough time to read and review. Once again, Mr. Speaker, no one rose to debate, so the question was called at eleven o'clock in the morning when the day's business began. During the previous week the Opposition members had complained that the Government was cutting off its chance to debate this Bill. Having had lots of notice of their opportunity to debate it on Monday morning, they were not here.

I caution the people in the House today and those watching it on television to remember that the Opposition will howl about the Government allocating a certain amount of time to debate. However, on the last two occasions that we moved allocation because the Opposition was filibustering, it did not have its members in the House to debate the question. I, therefore, pre-empt that argument right now, Mr. Speaker. I would like to announce that we will be voting to allocate an appropriate amount of time for debate on a Bill which has a great deal of study through a White Paper, committee, and at second reading stage. It is about time we got on with the business of the House.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): It is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that the Parliamentary Secretary to the House Leader (Mr. Lewis) is hell-bent on closing debate on the redistribution Bill. I would like to point out that this is the first time in history that a Government has moved to bring in redistribution so rapidly and without concurrence from both sides of the House. With 211 Members of Parliament, the Government feels that it can do anything, regardless of whether it is fair and equitable and regardless of whether the Opposition supports the Bill. This is the final nail in the coffin of the consensus approach to redistribution. This is a bad day for Parliament and for the consensus approach which the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) talked about during the election campaign. He talked about reforming Parliament and about a new civility.