

Time Allocation for Bill C-30

They appreciate the frustrations and the problems in opposition.

There is a sickness in this country in terms of parliamentary democracy. It was one of the sadnesses of the defeat of February 18, regardless of the fact that some people sit on the right side and some on the left side of the House. I am referring to the fact that through our parliamentary institution there was not enough time to educate those who only had days in government. Both of the parliamentary secretaries who spoke today are able parliamentarians. They would be that much more able and competent if they had had a longer time in opposition to understand the real process of government, rather than the brief few days they were in opposition.

The hon. member for Argenteuil (Mr. Gourd) spoke on a point of order. He mentioned that this House of Commons has only been sitting for 41 days since the last election. The totality of the previous government's term was only 47 days. That is not time enough for parliamentary secretaries, no matter how able or competent, to start to appreciate what real reform should be, especially those members who have only sat in government. We cannot get real reform when a basic blank cheque bill for \$12 billion is brought in and there has been no direction from the government treasury benches as to how government fiscal and monetary policies will be utilized and developed from that \$12 billion.

I mainly mentioned the parliamentary secretaries who spoke, but the Minister of Finance was here before. How many members opposite came here only in 1974? How many of them appreciate that the total budget of the House of Commons and the Government of Canada up until 1968 was only \$12 billion? I think the two parliamentary secretaries both were elected in 1974. I am not casting anything on them personally, but they have had no experience in terms of restraint in government spending. Six years later the budget, which had reached \$12 billion in the first term of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), was \$28 billion. We all know what has been happening ever since. We are being asked for a blank cheque amounting to \$1 billion for each month, or, as someone said, in effect it is \$1 billion for each of the 12 hours that this debate has lasted.

Obviously the public outside is turned off by a lot of what goes on inside here. There is a crying out for some direction in economic policy, so that their pocketbooks mean a little more at the end of a week than will be the case if inflation and all the other economic problems are not brought under control and there is not some direction from the treasury benches. I do not think the public is upset because we have spent 12 hours on a blank cheque for \$12 billion. It was almost the exact amount of total federal spending back in 1968, which at that time amounted to \$12,200 million. That is why members of the opposition resent this fact.

In a new Parliament there are supposed to be opportunities to reform our procedures. All members know we have archaic methods and outdated rules which must be brought up to date.

One does not start to develop that atmosphere when the government brings in time allocation or closure—call it what you will, we all know what it does; it cuts off debate—in the first major spending program. Quite frankly I am amazed.

If my party had stayed in power longer, I would have counselled my prime minister to bring in allocation many more times on issues of topical interest where the public could give its opinion on the subject matter, whether it was on unemployment or legislative bills. That is where allocation should come in, when debate has been held up by an opposition that goes on and on. One only has to read the debates of the last House to see the repetitive speeches on the mortgage tax deductibility bill. Debate went on for six or eight days. I forget how many hours or how many speakers there were. I would venture to say that both parliamentary secretaries who spoke here today contributed their words of repetition to that debate. The public of Canada had already decided upon that issue, among other reasons, by voting for us in the election held just before.

It is rather ironic that we are debating this matter today, this allocation motion. We all know that the real action today is not in this House, but it involves the House, the people across the country from coast to coast, the spokesmen for the federal government and/or the provincial governments who are at 24 Sussex Drive.

In view of some of the events which occurred outside the House in the last three weeks, I should like to say that there has been some good will. Everyone in the House wanted to ensure that there was a strong No. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said that his party would be voting no to this motion tonight. I should like to indicate that the members on my side of the House will be voting no to this motion. There has been some good will, but good will is not built in a new Parliament when a blank cheque for \$12 billion is brought in. This cannot be done after only 12 speakers from Her Majesty's loyal opposition and four from the NDP have participated. The government cannot say that is time to cut off debate.

We are heading into the summer recess and the Prime Minister is trying to wrestle and come to grips with the premiers of the provinces in order to resolve fundamental questions. We all know that attitude is important. I gather my time is just about up on this motion, but in closing it is ironic that the Prime Minister sent roses or flowers to the different suites of the premiers as they checked in last night. I give him credit for that; perhaps it will get things off to a good start at 24 Sussex. Hopefully roses and sweet flowers in the suites of the premiers will help; but poison ivy in the House of Commons will not help the attitude, impression, confidence and reciprocation of members. This allocation motion is a dose of poison ivy. It will poison the atmosphere and affect members in their deliberations when we get on with government business. I am certainly glad we are voting no.