

Supply

What I find interesting about it is that this is what as known as an opposition day. The members of the New Democratic Party could have chosen any topic to discuss, anything at all to discuss.

Mrs. Browes: Something relevant.

Mr. Nicholson: They chose this motion, calling on and reminding the Senate to fight, to reject, to defeat any bill coming from the House of Commons. Quite apart from anything else, it was very unfortunate for them to do that. The country is involved with very serious constitutional debates in the city of Ottawa right as I speak. Instead of addressing themselves to those vital national concerns, the NDP decided this was the day it would decide to champion Senate rights. I think that is unfortunate. NDP members could have talked of any number of issues. They could have talked about their ideas for cutting the deficit.

That would be a very short debate and this debate is scheduled to last four or five hours. We do not want to talk about NDP ideas to cut the deficit.

An Hon. Member: Ideas on anything.

Mr. Nicholson: The member for Mississauga West says, "Ideas on anything". Well, this is what the NDP have chosen. They have chosen to talk about the rights of the Senate and championing the cause of the Senate to defeat House of Commons bills.

They could have talked about the environment. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State knows as well as I and other members on this side of the House what a vital concern this is to Canadians from coast to coast. There are so many different aspects of the environment, so many different ways in which the House could be a positive force. The NDP could have chosen to talk about that. But, no, not a word about the environment. They decided to take up all of Parliament's time today to talk about the Senate.

Mrs. Browes: They could have talked about the Rouge Valley.

Mr. Nicholson: They could have talked about the Rouge Valley and all the efforts made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State. They could have talked and commended her for all of her efforts in championing that cause in Scarborough. That would have been worth a debate. I would be pleased to have

government members discuss for four or five hours her efforts to preserve that part of the environment within Metropolitan Toronto. But no, they chose not to discuss that.

They could have talked about the problems in Canadian agriculture. I see a former agriculture minister from the former Liberal government. I am sure he would have been pleased to say a few words on the subject of agriculture. There was nothing about that from the NDP.

They could have talked about the problems in the fishing industry. There are many areas of concern and interest to Canadians, but they chose not to talk about any of them.

The NDP decided to talk about what they could do to encourage the Senate to deny, to hold up, to defeat, and not pass the laws of this democratically elected chamber.

An Hon. Member: That they agreed were necessary. Tax reform they said was necessary.

Mr. Nicholson: Well, they chose not to talk about it today.

It should be made clear that this is a reactionary measure. I cannot help but think that former Leaders of the New Democratic Party would have very strong words to say today if they knew that the party they led in the House had now taken on the mantle of Senate rights. I think many of them would be very surprised.

One of my colleagues was talking about J. S. Woodsworth, a former Leader of the New Democratic Party, Mr. Lewis and T. C. Douglas. I do not even think you have to go back that far. I believe that the Hon. Ed Broadbent would be very disappointed if he knew the direction that the party had taken on this particular issue and I do not think you have to go back in the history—

An Hon. Member: How does Audrey feel about it?

Mr. Nicholson: My colleague asks how Audrey feels about it. It looks like it is every person for himself in the NDP these days on issues like this. They argue among themselves. The House Leader of the NDP said one thing on Senate reform, and the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca is obviously championing it. The member for Edmonton East is against it. Maybe that is a sign of the new leadership in the New Democratic Party: if they speak in three different voices on the subject of