

Government Orders

insufficient to debate a bill which is so roundly condemned by the public.

If this bill were introduced at any time other than when the GST is the big item in the news, it would be roundly condemned in the press and there would be a public outcry against it. This government is seeking to stifle any criticism, and avoid the public outcry, by ramming this bill through with time allocation, and I object in the strongest terms.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I have mixed feelings, I suppose, about participating in this debate. Once again we have to say it is a very dark day for the democratic system in the House of Commons. It is a very bleak day in terms of parliamentary democracy because once again we see the Conservatives using the heavy hand of closure to muzzle the House of Commons, to cut off debate prematurely, to end discussion of government legislation.

I want to at the beginning make it very clear that the people who are watching the debate today on television should be well aware that this government has used some form of closure and time allocation more than we have ever witnessed in Canadian history over a period of time. I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, first of all that since closure was first introduced away back in 1913, it had only been used 19 times up until 1984.

Then of course in 1984 things began to change. Closure of course is a motion which ends further debate on a measure with a mandatory vote at 1 a.m. The Tories have used it 15 times and have threatened to use it another 10 times since 1984. Time allocation allows the government to set a time limit of as little as two days of debate on any measure. It has been used 27 times in the six years of Tory government.

What it says is that this government does not like democracy. It finds the Parliament of Canada a nuisance. It finds the committees of Canada a nuisance. It has taken step after step, time after time, to throw the rule books away and has used this very Draconian, undemocratic, unparliamentary measure called time allocation or closure.

I challenge the minister who indicated that an agreement could not be reached. Quite the contrary, we made a very clear offer. When the New Democratic Party was approached, after we had had only one speaker on the bill to dismantle Petro-Canada, we were asked if we could come to an agreement. We said: "We are reluctant to agree to anything that would expedite the destruction of our national oil company, but at this particular stage of the debate, to facilitate the matter getting into committee where we can bring forward witnesses to point out clearly what this is going to do to our ability in terms of energy security in the future, we would like to be given four and a half hours of debate time in the House of Commons".

Four and a half hours of debate time on a process to dismantle a multimillion dollar enterprise that touches the lives of every Canadian, no matter where they live in the country, is hardly being unrealistic. The government said: "No, we cannot allow four and a half hours of time to listen to the opposition on this matter, so we are going to introduce time allocation".

This is at a time when we are in an energy crisis, where the oil prices at the pumps are sky-rocketing. Canadians carry a card in their wallets, their purses and their hip pockets with pride, and that is the Petro-Canada card, because they know it is their oil company. It is not Mobil Oil, it is not part of the Exxon family, it is not a multinational company operating out of the United States. It is Canadians' own oil company, Petro-Canada. Now the government wants to say: "We are going to take all of the credit cards and in a sense tear them up on behalf of Canadians because we want to turn it over to private interests".

Mr. Speaker, do you know how many oil producing countries in the world have private interests solely in control of their oil patch? The United States is one, because it owns virtually all of the multinationals. Second, Margaret Thatcher sold off their national oil company as part of her ideological approach to the marketplace. That is the only one, other than the United States. Every other country has its own oil company.

Now the Tories say: "There is one last vestige of Canadianism in this country and we are going to disman-