

Time Allocation

ancient tradition of this institution and our predecessor institutions that no matter how opposed an individual may be to a motion or a Bill everyone has the right to introduce such motion or Bill.

So much is that a part of the tradition that even though the Speaker utters the words: "Shall the member have leave to introduce the Bill", since time immemorial there has been an automatic "yes" from Members of the House of Commons. When those words were spoken with respect to Bill C-22, the Opposition said "no" and demanded a standing vote. It is a time-honoured tradition that no matter how you feel about a Bill you recognize that everyone, including the Government, has the right to introduce it. It is fundamentally anti-democratic to vote against introduction and first reading, yet the Opposition did that as a dilatory tactic.

The Opposition did it again at first reading. The next thing the Speaker asks is whether the House will permit first reading of the Bill. That is never voted on in keeping with the principle that first reading and printing of a Bill is a time-honoured right of every Member of the House. The Opposition voted against that.

After those dilatory tactics we had 28 hours of debate at second reading, hardly a miniscule amount of time. We then discussed with the Opposition how many hours would be necessary to complete second reading and whether they would be content with four days, five days, or six days. They refused to negotiate. It was necessary for the Government to introduce time allocation because there was no willingness to discuss the orderly conduct of the House. We have no choice but to introduce time allocation when the Opposition refuses to negotiate.

There were 82 hours of study in the committee, hardly a quick passing glimpse. Sixty-five hours were spent hearing witnesses. The idea of the new rules with respect to legislative committees was that since the House had decided on the question of principle we need not discuss the principle any longer but, rather, should go to a legislative committee to discuss the details. The Opposition did not want that. They wanted to hear whether witnesses were opposed or in favour of the general principle of the Bill. Government Members on the committee agreed to that.

[Translation]

Mr. Rossi: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a Point of Order.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Bourassa (Mr. Rossi) rises on a Point of Order.

Mr. Rossi: Let us see if we have a quorum, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hudon: Will you count, please?

Mr. Rossi: Mind your own business!

Mr. Hudon: I behave the way you do.

Mr. Rossi: There is no opposition.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: I have heard the Hon. Member and I have observed the House. I declare there is a quorum in the House.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, 46 different groups were witnesses before the committee, a total of 98 different individuals. The purpose of a legislative committee is to discuss in detail the legislation and study and discuss amendments to clauses. The Opposition proposed 11 amendments in committee, three of which were proposed by the New Democratic Party. One of the three was adopted by the Government. The other two amendments were technical and the Hon. Member representing the New Democratic Party was satisfied that the Act took care of those concerns.

At report stage, 47 amendments were moved. If Hon. Members of the Opposition were keeping with the traditions of respect for this institution about which they talk, those 47 amendments would have been moved at committee. That is the purpose of legislative committees and the new rules, which we ought now to re-examine in view of the behaviour of the Opposition.

The Bill then came back before the House at report stage and there were more dilatory tactics. Five days were wasted on the dilatory tactics of the Opposition. There were petitions brought forward last week and the week before which were signed in August. Members presenting them sanctimoniously stated that they were following the time-honoured tradition of representing their constituents by bringing forward their concerns. How can anyone make a statement like that with a straight face?

Since the 1984 election there has never been a piece of legislation which has had more discussion in Parliament, outside of Parliament, and in various domains across the country than this piece of legislation. If there is anyone in this House who can suggest that they have not had an opportunity to examine this legislation, that they have not heard about it from the people concerned and received their reactions, they must have been living in some sort of cocoon. According to the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young) and the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) 300,000 letters were sent out in opposition to Bill C-22. The CLCs, the auto workers and the generic manufacturers sent out brochures. Tens of thousands of brochures were sent out. The Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall) toured the country appearing on talk shows trying to get people agitated and upset. The Opposition spared no effort to criticize and condemn this legislation in hopes of upsetting the people of Canada so that they would be willing to demand that the Government stop this legislation.

● (1730)

How successful was the Opposition? A recent opinion poll by Decima asked the question: "I would support the Bill if the Government put in place a way of making sure that the drug price increases would not be higher than the rate of inflation".