

Motion for Concurrence in Report

involved, then and only then did the opposition say, "Here is a measure where the rights of the people of Canada are involved. We, in the exercise of our duty and our responsibility, will say no to this measure." The result in the pipe line debate was that the government imposed closure. Mr. Speaker, this is the only way it can be.

It is not possible, it cannot be possible to precut, to prepackage all of the legislative proposals which the government may see fit to put before the house at the beginning of a session. Using the *reductio ad absurdum* theory, why wouldn't the government make its task a great deal easier by simply attaching a schedule to the speech from the throne, with the number of days, number of hours and number of minutes opposite and say, "This is our program. This is the time available to deal with these measures"? I suggest this is the sort of thing which the government is seeking to impose upon us, and I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is not right.

Parliament, sir, must be an instrument of attack to deal with the problems which hold back the advance of progress. But parliament is also the final line of defence against tyranny, present or potential, and also against the encroachment of a vast, impersonal and sprawling bureaucracy. The average man, bewildered and overpowered by thousands of laws and regulations which press in upon him and increasingly restrict his freedom, his right to make decisions, would be left absolutely defenceless without an active parliament with the strength and vitality which it must possess.

This afternoon we had the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) telling us about his expedition into the north, and what he had done with regard to changing the situation in respect to the provision of health care for Indians. Mr. Speaker, that would not have been done if it had not been for the fact that last year in parliament members of the opposition brought this problem before the government. They raised it on the estimates. They raised it in questions. In the result, this brought a very serious and difficult situation to the attention of the government. The result is that the minister has possibly carried into effect a decision which might have been made earlier, but which had its initial stages on the floor of this house.

● (9:40 p.m.)

Our strength here lies in the ability to debate matters and oppose the government when we feel it is wrong. We reject the idea

that an executive branch of government represents all that is good and wise. We feel that because of our close and considered connection as members with the people we represent, and all the people of Canada, that we are very often placed in a better position than members of the government to assess and evaluate their proposals. We feel that the tremendous and accelerated zeal of the government to levy a devastating taxation burden, accompanied by the high cost of living, has such a detrimental effect to the present and future of the Canadian people that we should be entitled to challenge and scrutinize government spending proposals for an adequate time, and in an adequate way. That right is not discharged by a proposal which limits us to debating spending programs and determinations in a standing committee. We disagree with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), and his group of parliamentary busters, that the election has put them in the driver's seat, not only to initiate but to brush aside or minimize objectives. Here lies the fundamental difference between the government and us, and here we draw the issue, and here we will fight.

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I should like to begin my remarks this evening first by complimenting the leader of the opposition, and by offering my thanks to him for the compliment he gave to me. My compliment to him is, first, in relation to the uncommonly good speech, and while—

Some hon. Members: Shame, shame.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Oh, come now; come now.

An hon. Member: You are getting cheeky.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Let me compliment him then on his extremely good speech. While I do not agree with many of the things he has said, I regard his speech as an outstanding rhetorical performance and one of the best I have heard in parliament. I should also like to give thanks to him for the compliment he paid to me. He is looking a little nonplussed at this point, but I assure those surrounding him that he did not let them down. He made it perfectly clear that there was little in the way of godliness to commend me, but he made it clear also that there was something to be said for me on the subject of cleanliness. Perhaps I should not argue in respect of the godliness part, but the hon. member was kind enough to credit me with