

*Business of the House*

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** I will tell the hon. member what they want today. They have asked the Minister of National Health and Welfare to hold a federal-provincial conference of health ministers. The minister promised that the conference would be held in October. He put it off until December, then he put it off until January of 1976, and the conference has not been held yet. Why is the Minister of National Health and Welfare afraid to meet his provincial counterparts? I have no doubt why—they would accuse him of bad faith, of breaking the commitment he made in January, 1975. He does not want to go to them unless he has a bill that has been approved in principle by parliament, which would give him authority to say, "This is what we are going to do; you can either like it or lump it".

The minister is asking the House to allow him to ram this legislation through so that he can go to the provinces with a *fait accompli* and say, "This is what you are going to do and you will have to do it". I say that this is contrary to all the principles that the government has so eloquently espoused on co-operative federalism. This is arrant arrogance and nothing less. That arrogance was further expressed today by the President of the Privy Council in bringing in a closure motion so as to permit only another five hours of discussion on second reading of Bill C-68.

When the President of the Privy Council and his parliamentary secretary get up in this House and say, "Ah, but you will have plenty of opportunity to discuss this matter in the standing committee, on report stage and on third reading", we have no assurance, Mr. Speaker, that a closure motion will not be used again in the course of the passage of this bill through the House. The government is using its muscle to ram legislation through the House without giving the provincial governments the opportunity at a federal-provincial conference of health ministers to express their opinions or explore other means—and there are other means—by which the cost of both medicare and hospital insurance can be reduced. Rather than meet the provinces, this group of people who have grown so mighty that they do not need to sit down and talk to the provinces now want parliament to give them the authority to force the provinces to do what the federal government wants them to do.

A Greek playwright—I think it was Sophocles—said some 2,300 years ago: "Whom the Gods would destroy they first make mad". This government is mad with power. The government's arrogance has gone beyond anything I have ever seen in any government over the last three or four decades.

● (1630)

The provincial governments, which are unanimous in opposing this legislation, and the people of Canada once they understand the implications of it, will be roused as they have not been roused for a long time. The government may win this vote today by invoking closure, but it will not convince the people of Canada that the action which it is taking is either fair or equitable. The Canadian people know perfectly well that all the federal government is seeking to do is to transfer the financial cost of providing health service in this country over to the provincial governments so that it can evade its just responsibility.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has expired.

**Mr. J.-J. Blais (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) has done, I will try to speak to the motion before the House. The speech made by the hon. member is admirable, one that he should repeat during the five hours that will be allocated after this motion has been accepted by the House. I note he is not on the list of the 13 speakers who have spoken on behalf of the socialist party. Undoubtedly he will have an opportunity to deal with this particular—

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member better get his facts straight. If the rest of his speech is going to be as inaccurate as his opening statement, it will be a very bad speech. If he will look up the list of speakers he will find that I did speak in this debate on second reading. I was ready to speak again on the amendment motion had the government not introduced this closure motion.

**Mr. Blais:** I note, Mr. Speaker, from glancing at the list that the hon. member was the third speaker on behalf of the New Democratic Party. I stand corrected. It was probably one of the better speeches because, as the debate progressed, the quality of the speeches decreased. That is understandable when the indicated aim of the NDP is not to present arguments that will persuade any member to change his view, but to try to persuade the executive to withdraw a particular piece of legislation.

I will now turn my attention to the remarks of the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Hnatyshyn). I would have expected that, as a young member who is very interested in matters of procedure in this House, he would have taken a more reasonable and tempered attitude vis-à-vis what the government is attempting to do in this instance. Contrary to what the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands failed to do, the hon. member should have recognized that what the government is doing in this instance is trying to give effect to the changes in the rules passed in 1969. They, in effect, attempted to shift the attention of the House from second reading, which is approval in principle, to the committee stage by the creation of committees with wider powers, and then to the report stage, which is the report stage from the committees, including amendments, and then to third reading.

That has basically been accepted by the House leader and the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin). They both indicated in papers presented to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization that they felt, as did the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), that there was a great waste of time in the House and that there ought to be a better allocation and administration of time so that legislation would be dealt with expeditiously.

I draw Your Honour's attention and that of the House to statements made in committee by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp). I quote from page 30 of issue 9 of the committee proceedings: