

*Government Orders*

tures Act, time allocation at second reading; and, the Hibernia Project, time allocation for both report stage and third reading.

That is the litany of dictatorial approaches that the government has taken to government legislation in the House. In every case the debates have been short. It is not as though there has been a week allowed on any one of these bills before closure or time allocation was applied. In every single case the debate was less than five sitting days. We have never had a protracted debate in this Chamber on any item of government legislation since November of 1988.

The minister of state and government House leader were up on October 11 when the government lost its first notice on this bill. Mr. Speaker, you will recall that they gave notice of time allocation on the first day of debate on this bill, if you can imagine.

• (1130)

During the first day they said they were going to move it the next. It was only because the Minister of State for Privatization could not read his notice properly that we were fortunate enough to have the Speaker strike that notice out, and so we have got it again today.

The minister of state and leader of the government in the House got up and made a speech. In his speech he quoted certain statistics. He said that between 1980 and 1984 time allocation under rule 78, which we are discussing today, was used 29 times in that four-year period. He claimed that in the six years since then it has been used 27 times. Well, this must be number 28.

He was talking about rule 78 alone. He tried to suggest that the government had been slow in using this rule because it had only used it as many times in six years as the previous government had in four. What he omitted to discuss was the number of times closure, rule 57, had been applied. As I have indicated, that has already been used 13 times in this Parliament, and I do not know how many times it was used in the previous one. I was not here and I have not gone back to check all those records.

It is a distorting group of figures that the government House leader used. I submit it was a set of figures that were intended to mislead the public as to the intent of the government here in using closure so often. I submit that when you look at the total picture, this government has used closure and abused the rules of this House to

ensure that its legislation gets through without debate or with very limited debate.

I would like to turn to the example I cited in this House a year ago, on October 26, 1989. I was speaking on this same subject in this House. I pointed out what kind of record it was the previous government had.

As the government House leader has said, time allocation was used something like 29 times in a four-year period. One of the times it was used was in 1983. This was on Bill C-155, an act to facilitate the transportation, shipping and handling of western grain.

That bill was extensively debated in this House. I would like to recount, Mr. Speaker, once again the statistics on that debate to show something of the latitude that was allowed by previous governments, by previous Houses, by previous Parliaments, that is not allowed in the current situation.

That bill was introduced on second reading and 97 speakers were given an opportunity to address the bill at second reading. Just at second reading, 97 speakers, Mr. Speaker. Think of it. We have not had anything like that number on this bill. I would be surprised if we have had more than 10. I did not do a count on the total, but there are only four from this caucus, and there cannot be many more from the New Democratic Party caucus. In fact there would be less. I would bet there were two.

The bill was sent to a committee after this extensive second reading, nine days at second reading, 97 speakers. Then it went to committee. Three months of committee hearings with over 200 representations, and then the bill came back at report stage. How long was it debated at report stage, Mr. Speaker? What is the longest we have had in this Parliament at report stage on any bill? I will bet it has not been more than three days. I will bet it has not been more than two, but I will give the government the benefit of the doubt and say it was three. Fifteen days on report stage on this bill, Mr. Speaker, 15 days, and then finally the government brought in time allocation and limited debate on third reading to two days. That was considered Draconian.

Hon. members who now sit on the government benches objected in the strongest terms to the use of time allocation on that bill. Yet, here we have the minister piously intoning that we ought to agree to this because it is reasonable in the circumstances, that it is a fair restriction on debate because we have not been able to agree on a time allocation for this bill. Four days is