

was how fast that time was approaching. My counterparts were not in a position to agree to any arrangements for concluding the debate and sending the bill to committee. Therefore, the government had to take the responsibility.

It is important to note that this motion does not end discussion of the issues raised in Bill C-83. Far from it. This motion provides four additional days of debate at second reading. Then the bill will go to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, where witnesses may be heard and the bill will be given very thorough consideration. After committee, of course, there is the report stage, and after that there will be a very thorough debate at third reading. Thus, this motion is not so much intended to restrict discussion as to move it in an orderly fashion into a more satisfactory forum.

I think in the long run it is beneficial to members on all sides to know in advance how much time is to be given to various debates, and I hope that in the future it will be possible more often to fix the time for debates by agreement among the parties. As things now stand, open-ended debates at the early stages of measures such as this help neither their advocates nor their opponents. Members supporting a measure all too often hesitate to intervene in debate lest the time taken be unduly extended. Members opposing a measure tend, after a while, to repeat arguments and to lose thereby the attention of the media and the public. I might say that a strong advocate of this course was the former leader of the Progressive Conservative party who, like myself, felt that we should concentrate our efforts more in committee and on third reading than on second reading stage.

Mr. Paproski: But he was not in favour of the muzzle at second reading.

Mr. Sharp: The legislative process is deliberately designed to provide opportunities for members not only to examine bills but also to stimulate public response. This particular bill raises issues that have been of public interest for many months. It was introduced late in February and will have received second reading by mid-April after being debated in the House on ten days. This does not seem to me to be an unreasonable amount of time either in terms of House time or of the over-all passage of time that is necessary to stimulate public response. Now it will go to committee where, as I have said, it will receive careful consideration. In due course it will be passed, but that will be many weeks from now. This time allocation motion does not end debate. We are attempting to make the legislative process an orderly one. We would prefer to do it by agreement. We hope that members will soon realize that parties do not have to agree on a bill in order to agree on how much time to spend on a given stage of the bill.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am always amused when the government House leader begins any discussion for making parliament more responsive with the introduction of a motion the effect of which is to muzzle parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sharp: Some muzzle! It's a ten-day muzzle.

Business of the House

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): The government does this when public response shows the government and the opposition that the public opposes this ill-conceived bill. The government can think of no better way of stopping public discussion than by limiting debate.

Mr. Paproski: By muzzling parliament.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): The government House leader decided to do just that. I can think of no better method of muzzling discussion on the bill than embarking on this bad procedure. What is really interesting about this government House leader is the kind of issue he chooses with respect to closure. First it was the anti-inflation program, Bill C-73, which by any measure in this country, prejudiced or unprejudiced, socialist, Conservative or Liberal, political or apolitical, is an absolute failure in terms of inflation. That was his first choice for closure.

● (1600)

The second choice was the abomination of Bill C-58, the *Time and Reader's Digest* bill. It started off as a marvellous piece of legislation to improve the publishing industry in this country. All of a sudden, with a little twist of the foot of the Minister of National Revenue, it became a piece of censorship legislation that no one could ever count on. It brought a degree of mystery and intrigue into the law, an ability to change legislation without referral to parliament the like of which we have never seen.

The third instance chosen to muzzle parliament and cut off debate for the government's own reasons and for the reasons advanced in the puffery of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) is this bill.

An hon. Member: Bill C-68.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Yes, there was one other, Bill C-68. That is another indication of the marvellous choices of the government House leader—a grand slam. That bill directly affects the delivery of health care in the province of Ontario and in other provinces. Surely there is not a self-respecting member on the other side who can support such stupidity.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): We have heard, in terms of the length of debate, the best example of the scissors' syndrome of this government. This bill is full of bureaucratic discretions in many things, not the least in gun control. There is a danger of imposing a burden on the law-abiding citizen and doing very little for the peace and security in this country and the protection of society which the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) indicated was the intention of this bill. That is the position which this government asks the House to lie down and accept for the purpose of closure. Mr. Speaker, we are not going to do that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): We are not going to accept the unintentional misleading of this House by the President of the Privy Council. He said we had debated