

Government Orders

submission being ignored, then it is a very serious action on the part of this government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, we in the Official Opposition participate in this debate very reluctantly. Obviously, we are not sure that this motion is in order; we have submitted arguments that the Chair is considering.

Nevertheless, since the debate is under way, Mr. Speaker, without prejudging it, but if the motion is ruled out of order or unacceptable, we must say that this whole debate will have been rather academic. That is how we feel about this. As a matter of fact, having stated the reasons why this motion is defective, I might add that this procedure is contrary to parliamentary tradition and is unprecedented in Parliament. Usually, when the government wants to revive a bill or put it back on the Order Paper following the prorogation of the House, it proceeds by unanimous consent.

Prorogation, as I explained earlier Mr. Speaker, puts an end to everything. It is not us, opposition members, who say so, but the very definition of the word "prorogation". It puts an end to everything and all items on the Order Paper lapse. And the government which—let's be candid about it—controls the agenda, as it controls the debates and the bills, knew full well that, if the House adjourned in May for almost a month and then there was a prorogation, these bills would be lost.

These are no doubt contentious bills, Mr. Speaker. We believe that some of them have been debated well and, so that the Canadian people will know, vigorously. We have tried to get across to this government that major amendments were required. We succeeded in some cases, but in others, we failed. It has to do with the way Parliament works and the rule of the majority where by the majority decides. So, the government does as it pleases.

Bill C-26, Mr. Speaker, is a bill intended to amend the Railway Act.

[*English*]

The purpose of the bill was for the termination of the At and East grain and flour subsidy announced in the budget of April 27, 1989, and put into place on July 16, 1989.

The whole subsidy aspect of Bill C-26 was questioned by many of us when the bill started first reading on June 16, 1989. That is some time ago, two years ago. We have had second reading speeches on February 12, 1990, February 20, 1990, April 30, 1990, and then it was referred to a legislative committee which reported back to the House about a month later, on May 31, 1990. It was debated again on June 5, 1990, and that was it. We never heard about it again. The government comes in after taking its decision to prorogue the House and says: "Well, even though the bill has been here for two years, we could not see ourselves able to take a few weeks or a few additional days during May or April to debate that bill. We would rather adjourn the House and go home." That is what happens when the government does not pay attention to its agenda. It misses sometimes and it is sometimes responsible for the slowness of this House.

The other one is Bill C-58, which was alluded to by my friend, and probably will be the object of great concern to many of us. The bill in question was first read on December 20, 1989. The second reading was on May 30, 1990. It was referred to a legislative committee on June 14, 1990. It was reported to the House on December 10, 1990. Nothing has happened since. That is more than six months ago. The government prorogued, yet it did not give a darn about what happened to that bill.

Here is the government again trying to tell us that the opposition is preventing legislation from going through. The government controls the agenda. It proposes the agenda to the House. We, the opposition, can only dispose of it in due course. It did not propose and we could not do anything about it.

Bill C-73 I think has already been taken care of. If my memory serves me right, C-73, by unanimous consent, was re-tabled or taken up where it was left off and is now called Bill C-8. That is the only bill on which the government came to us and said: "Would you agree to unanimously replace this bill on the agenda?" We did and the act was passed here last week on May 23.

Why could the government not at that time include the other bills with it? Why could it not ask for unanimous consent on the other bills? It did not ask. It picked one, Bill C-73. As far as we are concerned, as the argument put by my House leader here today showed, this motion is irregular and out of order because it still contains an item on which this House has passed judgment. This House has decided that C-73 would be passed. This