

Business of the House

House in which there is no good will, and a House in which they never again can expect to get the co-operation of the combined opposition parties.

Finally, may I just remind the government that it took the King-St. Laurent governments 22 years to become arrogant to the point where they could impose closure. It has taken this government less than four years to achieve the same degree of arrogance, and the same fate awaits it as befell the King-St. Laurent governments after 1957.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, although the subject under discussion is obviously important, it is a bit difficult to see that importance emerge from some of the discussions we have had. I want to deal only with what is before us. I want to say to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) and to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner), that consciously or unconsciously they really put the case before the House and, between them, condemned what the government has done, and condemned rule 75C.

I understood the Minister of Transport said he was chasing elephants somewhere in the jungle, when he declared that if the government had not done what it did do, we would be nine months longer studying this bill. I tell him that is not chasing elephants, that is chasing red herrings. I tell him that statement is not honest, that it is not justified, that the co-operation of the opposition parties in allocating time for every section of this bill in Committee of the Whole proves that his statement that it would take nine months more is a total fabrication, and that he ought not to have made it.

The Minister of Transport has the evidence of the actions and the behavior of the opposition parties throughout the discussion in Committee of the Whole when we agreed on a day for this subject, and two days for that subject, and so on. It may well be that agreement could not be given for limiting debate to four days—

Mr. Sharp: Or five.

Mr. Lewis: It may well be that the government House leader could not get agreement on any particular number of days, but as the House leader for our party pointed out, that does not mean to say that if he had continued to seek the co-operation of the opposition parties he would not have got it. Perhaps by agreement it could have taken six days or eight days.

Mr. Gibson: Or nine?

Mr. Lewis: The second point I want to make is in connection with a statement made by the Minister of Justice. I may not have it word for word, but I think I have it basically correct. I believe he said that democracy means debate but it also means decision after debate. That is the kind of trite statement that really attempts to hide the subject. Let the Minister of Justice visit some children in any public school and tell them the same thing, and they will all raise their hands in agreement with him. Of course, the issue is how long a debate, how deep a debate, how broad a debate—not the silly trite nonsense that you have to get to a decision some time. Who the devil disagrees with him on that?

The fact is that what the Minister of Justice said was echoed later by the Minister of Transport. Again I have not got it word for word, but I think the essence of it was

[Mr. McGrath.]

that when we debate something for what the government considers adequate time, the government wants the right to have a decision made. Who the devil are they to make that decision? The government makes that kind of decision only if it abrogates to itself the kind of arrogant and absolutely totalitarian powers which it included in rule 75C. That is why we opposed it in 1968-69. That is why we were ready to agree with 75A and 75B seeking a House order when parties have agreed unanimously, or by a majority. And that is why we opposed 75C because we recognized it placed in the hands of the government a power which it will abuse, and it is abusing that power today.

• (3:50 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, it is for them alone to say how long this debate can take. I do not say that the debate should be endless; I do not say that there should not be agreement on allocation of time from day to day as we go along and I am sure that can be obtained. If the debate had lasted a long time anyone could legitimately and reasonably say it was too long and then perhaps the government would have a case to go and plead with Parliament to do something. I say to the ministers, to the House leader, to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson), to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), that even though they add everything up and say we have had 37 days of debate, 12 on second reading and 25 in committee of the whole, that that is not only not an unreasonable length of time to debate this bill but it is obviously an inadequate length of time to debate it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: A bill that deals with every aspect of life and the economy of Canada as far as it affects income tax and other aspects of taxation and covers 707 pages requires three or four months of study instead of only 25 days or 37 days, and it cannot be said that sufficient time has been taken.

Nobody has referred to this point, Mr. Speaker, and I want to make it with all the force I can: this government is guilty not only of arrogance in the way it is dealing with the question of time now but was guilty of stupidity or arrogance or duplicity or something else when it drafted the bill. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) said that members of the opposition can vote against the clauses they do not like. Let me tell him that unless you, Sir, change what are the habits of this House there will not be any opportunity to vote on each clause that we do not like. This is because the mandarins, who really draw up the legislation, drew one clause for the most important part of the bill. Clause 1 is 596 pages long and deals with 256 subclauses. It deals with every aspect of the tax law that is important. It deals with exemptions, with capital gains, with exemptions for mining and oil companies. Every aspect of income tax that we are concerned with is in one clause, Mr. Speaker, and we will be able to vote only once on that clause. That was done deliberately, Mr. Speaker; that cannot have been an accident.

No one can tell me that the advisers to the government or the Minister of Finance could not see what they were doing, that they were placing Parliament in an absolutely impossible straitjacket in having to vote on one clause