

I want to tell you that I do not vent my frustration at the Chair. It needs to be said, at a time of anger, emotion and crisis, that Members on this side of the House, in fact I am sure on all sides, have come to have a great deal of respect for the Chair. I regret that the Government, because of its short-term agenda for getting this Bill through the House, has used and abused the rules of this Chamber. I regret that the Government has put the Speaker of the House of Commons in this position today. It is no easy task to come to a position in an adversarial forum where members of all Parties, whatever their views, have a high degree of respect for the Chair. The greatest asset to the proper working of any Parliament is a high degree of respect for the Chair.

You have had that respect and I hope you continue to have that respect. However, I believe what the Government has done today, the way in which this matter has been resolved today, has seriously strained, soiled, poisoned, and dissipated much of the fundamental goodwill and confidence in the rules which govern this place and which we have seen exercised under your wise guidance.

I regret that the Government—I can almost hear the sound of jackboots in the background this afternoon—has abused the rules of Parliament. I regret that the Government has put the Speaker in an untenable position. I regret that the Government prevailed upon the goodwill that members opposite have had for the Speaker, and in some measure—and I hope I am wrong—called into question the properly earned and richly deserved confidence that Members on this side of the House have had in the Speaker of this Chamber.

I say to the Government that this kind of trickery, this kind of expedience in handling this Bill may have met its short-term objective, but in the long term it has taken a serious and substantial step towards poisoning the atmosphere of this place. The Government has put the Speaker, who has exemplified the very best over the last number of months, in a position he does not deserve to be in.

Having said that, I leave this Chamber because I can no longer participate in this debate.

Some Hon. Members: Have a nice weekend.

Mr. Speaker: In view of the fact that some Hon. Members may have wanted to make statements as to how they voted or why they did not vote, I am wondering if anyone wishes to rise on that matter because, as I said, I will hear these points. With respect to at least one of the members I think I can identify, I will deal with the matter at the next sitting of the House.

Are there no further members rising on the point of order? The Hon. Member for Trinity (Miss Nicholson).

Miss Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak on the time allocation motion and Bill C-22.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair has listened with care and perhaps some anguish to what has been said here this afternoon, but that is my responsibility. I want all members to know that I,

too, have been in this place a long time. I understand that at times feelings can run very high. I have said things at times when, while I wanted to make the point, I wish perhaps I had said it in another way. I know Hon. Members have been doing everything they could in the last little while to be more courteous, with each other and therefore more respectful, I suppose, of the dignity of this place.

● (1720)

I will consider very carefully the points that have been made. I will come back to the Chamber and deal with them as they have been made. I have never suggested nor, do I think, would anyone else, that it is not possible to make a mistake here. I may have or I may not have. I will consider it very carefully, and if I have been in error, I will indicate that to the Chamber. After having listened to what Hon. Members have said, I think it might be helpful that the Chair return at an appropriate time to deal with some of the points which were made and to lay out as clearly as possible the proper procedural rules to apply in such a situation.

I will only say at this time that there is ample precedent for recognizing the Minister under the circumstances in which the Minister was recognized. That has been done by Speakers in the past, and I moved upon that basis. There are some Hon. Members who are not happy with the way in which I did that. I will consider that very carefully because when all is said and done I have to remain the servant of all members. The Hon. Minister has the floor for debate.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I thought I was recognized first because you were going in alphabetical order.

This motion ought not to be necessary. I completely concur with those sentiments. Unfortunately, there was no alternative left to the Government. Not once, not twice, but on three different occasions at this stage alone the Government House Leader and Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Lewis) approached opposition spokesmen and asked how many days would be required to dispose of this stage, whether they would require 5 days, 10 days, 15 days, or how many days.

On three different occasions the Opposition House Leaders would not discuss the matter. They did not make a counter offer. There were no negotiations. They refused to discuss the possibility of terminating debate at some time. Therefore, the Government had no choice. We cannot continue in perpetuity. Much was said this afternoon about this place working through negotiations and discussions. It ought to, but if the Opposition refuses to discuss the possibility of terminating a debate, the Government has no choice.

Let me deal with the question of how much time has been spent debating this legislation. As everyone knows, the draft legislation for Bill C-22 was made public at the end of June of last year, nine months ago. In the fall the Government attempted to bring the Bill forward. A precedent was set at that time and we will rue that day. It has been a longstanding,