

say to the government in all seriousness that they will facilitate the adjournment of this session by saying now they are prepared to bring in Bill C-190 either before interim supply or right after interim supply, and that Bill C-190 will be one of the items listed under other matters. If we receive this kind of assurance we are prepared to support the motion before us and facilitate the business of the house. But if the government intends to insist that its political considerations take priority over a piece of legislation which they themselves introduced for the alleged purpose of helping to reduce drug prices, then we shall have no alternative but to oppose this motion and continue to insist that before parliament recesses we shall deal with this important piece of legislation. We feel we owe this to the people of Canada as well as to the members of the committee on drugs who toiled for two years to deal with this question.

Neither members on this side of the house nor members on the other side have the right to allow this legislation to be tossed into the wastepaper basket merely because there are political considerations which require the government to adjourn the house early, rather than do the thing which is the responsibility of parliament at the present time.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: If the minister speaks now he will close the debate.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks of the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam. I almost gagged when I heard him say that the government was being influenced by political considerations. I suppose what we have heard this afternoon is a demonstration of the purest concern for the public interest, completely unrelated to ballot boxes or votes or constituencies or the electorate. It has been an exercise in the public interest, nothing else. It has been an exercise in public morality.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacEachen: A party which voted for dissolution three weeks ago—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. MacEachen: A party which voted for an end of parliament, a party which voted to kill every item on the order paper, is today

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on its feet crying and begging to us to stay here for a few more days to pass a particular bill.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. MacEachen: Those of us who have watched the New Democratic party on these occasions will realize that this is a familiar technique. Last July the house was moving toward an adjournment on a regular basis; there was a consensus that it was time to adjourn for a period and go back to our constituencies. Everyone felt this. Suddenly the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said "No, you cannot leave until I have my increase for the retired civil servants."

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

An hon. Member: Blackmail.

Mr. MacEachen: Today we were told by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam that if we give a commitment to him and his party that we will bring in the drug bill now, he and his hon. friends will facilitate the passage of supplementary estimates and supply. What is that but political blackmail?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacEachen: Yesterday we tried to work out arrangements to accommodate all interests in the house. There was resistance to it because members of parliament both on this side of the house and on the other side are fed up with the tactics which are being employed on every occasion when we try to bring on an adjournment, tactics of blackmail.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacEachen: We are told we cannot close the house until such and such is done. We on this side know perfectly well that we cannot bring an end to the session. The right hon. member for Prince Albert, when he sat on these benches as prime minister, often said "The government opens the house but the opposition closes it." He was perfectly right. We need to get interim supply. We need to get the supplementary estimates passed. We must have these things before the house is adjourned. There is no time limit on the discussion, and members of the opposition, or members on this side, can keep us here as long as they wish. It is up to the members of the opposition to decide when the house is to close.