

*Extension of Sittings*

It is very clear that the Government's motion oppresses the minority of Members of this House. We have not offered our consent to this motion because we realize it is intended to take away the protection offered by the rules of this House for orderly and logical debate. Since we do not accept this motion, which is a motion to suspend the rules, which is a motion to take away the rights we have under the rules, I say to you, Sir, you must not accept this motion. You have a duty to protect the minority of Members of this House who do not accept this motion since it pertains to the fundamental structure of this House and our parliamentary democracy.

Second, this motion is, to use the words of Bourinot "an exercise of the improvidence and the tyranny of the majority". It is clear the Government wants to use the majority it has to force its will on the House, not simply to have passed a particular measure which the House does not agree with but to suspend, cancel and sweep aside the fundamental rules of this House. When it comes to improvidence, the Government's own improvidence has led it to this arrogant and high-handed course of action as reflected by this motion, its improvidence brought about by its own incompetence and bad management.

Let us look at some examples. The final text of the trade agreement with the United States was released I think last December and the deal was signed between the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and President Reagan at the beginning of January, more than six months ago, yet the Bill to implement the agreement was tabled in this House only some two weeks ago. That is not the fault of the Opposition. We are not involved in the drafting of the Bill, unlike the Members of the U.S. Congress. I wish we had that same opportunity, but we do not. The Government cannot hold us responsible for its own inability to draft and table a Bill in the House with over six months to do so.

• (1540)

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in February on the issue of abortion. Only a few weeks ago, the Government indicated its intention to present in a resolution a course of action to deal with that situation. Nothing stopped it from dealing with the matter sooner. Certainly nothing stopped it in so far as the Opposition in the House is concerned.

The resolution to adopt the Meech Lake Accord was called for debate for only one day some three weeks ago. It is true that it was impossible to find a date on which the three Party leaders could speak on the same day, according to their schedules, until next week, but nothing stopped the Government from calling that motion earlier and inviting other Members who wanted to speak to do so. The Opposition has not been holding up this measure. This is something totally within the control of the Government, as is the case with any other measure on the Order Paper pertaining to government business.

I can make the same point about day care. When did the Government table its policy? Was it last year? Where is the

legislation? We are not stopping the legislation from going through. It is not before the House. Table the legislation and call it if it is ready.

The Government issued its policy on tax reform a year ago. Where is the legislation? It is not the Opposition that is preventing this legislation from coming forward for debate.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am of course listening very carefully to the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) because his arguments are cogent and very properly brought forward, but I would ask the Hon. Member, if he could, to come back to the central question and that is, does the Speaker have the authority to reject the motion which the Government has put forward and which the Hon. Member complains about.

**Mr. Gray (Windsor West):** Mr. Speaker, I am simply making the point that this is not a case of obstruction by the Opposition, but instead, a case of the incompetence, the improvidence through incompetence of the majority.

The Government's motion, to use the words of Bourinot, is not really "to permit abundant opportunity for the consideration of every measure to prevent any legislative action from being taken on such impulse". It is a matter of public record, and I ask you to take judicial notice, if I may use the phrase, that the Government has already signalled its intention to impose closure on second reading of the trade Bill and prevent that second reading, once the Bill is called, from going on for more than five days.

This is the most important measure to come before Parliament in over 60 years, perhaps the most important measure since confederation. The very sovereignty, the very existence of this country, is at stake. Instead, with its arrogant motion, the Government intends to try to legislate by exhaustion. This is certainly the wrong way to have proper debate and consideration in the House and the wrong way to have public input. I think the Government hopes its legislation, to use the words of Bourinot, will slip through "on sudden impulse", and surely that is wrong.

If the Government can abuse the use of its majority to set aside, through this motion, those parts of the rules that say when the House should sit, I submit the Government can do exactly the same thing with any other part of the rules. It can force through a motion of this kind to eliminate Question Period. I know the Prime Minister has already talked about how he would be very happy to do without it. The Government could force through a motion to eliminate committee hearings, the whole concept of study in a legislative or a Standing Committee of a measure before the House. It could wipe out debate on second reading or third reading or even the requirement for a formal vote on Bills. It could force through an order saying that all Bills are deemed adopted as soon as they are tabled.

Some may say that that would be impossible, our Constitution would not permit that. I submit that the only thing our Constitution says clearly and definitely about Parliament and