

by reason of his opposition to a tax that he believes is fundamentally wrong.

It was not just the tax. He has opposed several other policies that have to him seemed absolutely and fundamentally wrong. They were wrong because they were contrary to the promises made in the election in large measure, and they were wrong because they are bad for Canada in the second measure. We have been saying that for ages. Yet all we get for our efforts is closure. Every time the government says: "We have heard enough from the opposition on this bill after a day or two of debate. We will apply closure. We do not want to hear any more of your reasons for objecting to this bad legislation that we are proposing. That is our policy. We are going ahead with it. We do not care what Canadians think. We do not care what the opposition thinks. All we want to do is get the legislation passed into law. We will take our chances, thanks, in 1992 or 1993."

That is a new approach to government in Canada. I think it is detrimental to the way we operate in this House. Generally in the past debate has been slightly longer. There has been opportunity for more input into the decisions that the government has made through debate in this House. This government has chosen to limit debate at virtually every opportunity and to ignore Parliament as much as possible. I submit that that is a bad practice.

The hon. member for Abitibi suggests that maybe I am incorrect in that. If he is suggesting that the government is in fact acting in a way that supports Parliament and supports our democratic institution and supports the rights of members to participate in debate, I suggest he look at the record. I could cite the list. I do not have it with me today, but I could give the list of times that closure and time allocation have been applied in this House in this Parliament. I could give the hon. member the dates when Parliament was not sitting when in accordance with the rules it might well have been sitting. I can tell the hon. member that the reason for all the closure, the reason for all the time allocation, and the reason for the non-sitting of this House is attributable directly to the government.

• (1340)

I have spoken on this subject before in this House. He can look back at previous speeches and get the figures. I invite him to do so.

Private Members' Business

If the hon. member for Calgary Northeast is correct in his statement that in fact his move to this side of the House and his support of referenda generally is attributable to the fact that the government lacks the confidence of Canadians, which I submit is the case, then what I can say to him as a solution to the problem is why will he not urge more of his colleagues on the other side to join him on this side of the House. Certainly, we would welcome more members here to help vote against the government. We would be delighted to have them voting against the government. Whether they are in the Liberal Party or whether they are independents on this side of the House, as long as they are prepared to cast their votes against the government, I am happy to answer the question put by the hon. member for Niagara Falls.

We need a larger opposition that can force this government out so we can have an election and see whether in fact it has the confidence of the people, because that is the normal route. If the Prime Minister chooses, he can always dissolve the House and put us into an election. We in the Liberal Party are ready for an election at any time, not a referendum, but we are certainly ready for an election at any time. Indeed, we would welcome an election at this stage. Perhaps the hon. member for Niagara Falls would urge the Prime Minister to call an election so we can find out if the Canadian people support the policies that the hon. member says are so widely supported and so popular across Canada.

I can tell him, returning as I have from a weekend in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, that this government is notoriously unpopular in Kingston and the Islands. They are not in a position where people feel they can support the policies that the government is advocating and indeed, they would not support them if they were in a referendum or if they were put to them in a general election.

Mr. Speaker, I see that my time has expired and thank the House for its indulgence.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Calgary Northeast for bringing this motion to our attention today in terms of a Private Member's Bill on direct democracy or referenda. As has been said already, this is something that is really different or foreign to our Canadian system in terms of a citizen initiated referenda. I also remind the House that the time has come, in my opinion, that we should look