

Government Orders

today moving an order to cut off debate with one more debate on something so fundamental.

Mr. Speaker, why did the member for Winnipeg Transcona appeal to you? You are the first among equals and the defender of minorities in this House of Commons. I totally agree with the member for Winnipeg Transcona. It is time to exercise your discretion, Mr. Speaker, in respect to the issue on behalf of all Canadians regardless of how we vote on this bill. I do not yet know how I am going to vote on the bill myself. I can tell you, though, I know how I am going to vote on this motion if it is ever put. If this is not the exceptional case that exercises the discretion of the Chair then we might as well throw away the rule book.

• (1540)

There have been some other rulings made here very recently that certainly caused disrepute to this House as far as this member is concerned.

I am winding up. Normally I would not get into this type of thing because I think the government has the right of allocation of time, but not on one of the more fundamental issues that is going to confront this country and should confront this House but which will not confront the House when in effect there is this type of guillotine hanging over one's head.

Mr. Speaker: I will hear a short intervention from the hon. member for Calgary Northeast. Please make it short.

Mr. Alex Kindy (Calgary Northeast): Mr. Speaker, I certainly support the intervention by the member for Winnipeg Transcona. He brought the real arguments to you and I do not want to repeat them. I think it is extremely important to have debate on this important issue. This is an important bill.

People in Canada today look at NAFTA and they ask themselves what it is going to bring. It is a big bill, a couple of thousand pages, and I think every member should be able to express the opinions of their constituents on such an important issue that brings changes to Canada in many ways.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, you are going to make the wise ruling that I know you are able to make.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, might I be permitted a few more comments that I hope will be helpful, having listened to what the government House leader said.

The opposition is under no obligation, it seems to me, in the rules or anywhere else to accept packages for dealing with particular legislation. We are under no obligation to accept those and therefore it is not a justification for time allocation that we did not agree to certain things.

Time allocation comes, if it comes at all, because there is a feeling that the House must now divide and that the decision must be taken. It is not because the opposition did not agree with the government House leader on certain things.

In case the government House leader has not realized it, we are not all on the same team. We have conflicting views of what is appropriate. The opposition is not here to be punished by time allocation because we have not agreed to the government House leader's predetermined idea of how long things should take.

Finally I would just say this, Mr. Speaker, if it is relevant to your decision at all, which it may or may not be, the government House leader has repeatedly used the members of the British House of Commons as an example in so far as the way it dealt with Maastricht.

As I tried to point out to the government House leader the other day, with obviously no effect, yes, the members did deal with second reading very quickly. They have a tradition of doing that there, but they also have a different tradition with respect to committee. Their committee process can be much more lengthy. In the case of Maastricht which they regarded as a quasi-constitutional issue—many of us regard NAFTA as a quasi-constitutional issue—they dealt with it on the floor of the House of Commons in Committee of the Whole.

I know that at least on March 11 the members had already spent 14 days on Maastricht in Committee of the Whole on the floor of the House of Commons and expected at that time to spend at least another week or more on the floor of the House of Commons in Committee of the Whole dealing with that.

It is quite misleading for the government House leader to suggest that somehow the example of the British House of Commons should be followed and something like Maastricht was only dealt with in six hours and therefore we should be satisfied that NAFTA should be dealt with in six hours. It is comparing apples and