

Borrowing Authority

Mr. Knowles: Shame.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Shame.

Hon. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, my first notation for use in this speech was to discuss the House going downhill. It is rather ironic that my contribution should be preceded by another movement of closure by the group opposite. One could not have dreamed that the House of Commons could be demeaned in the way the government has managed to do it in the last few months. It has seized every opportunity to deny the privileges of members of the House with its consistent refusal to co-operate or to afford the usual respect members generally have for each other. It is symptomatic of what is wrong with the House and the country.

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Since the hon. member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon) inferred that we are not respecting the right of hon. members to speak and that we are refusing to negotiate the length of time for this debate, I must intervene to invite him to read carefully Standing Order 75A and Standing Order 75B.

I had an obligation to negotiate a reasonable length of time with his House leader. It was impossible to agree on any reasonable length of time, therefore I had to give notice of limiting the debate. I wanted to reach an agreement on a length of time which could have been more than one day, but it was impossible to reach such an agreement. I am not blaming his House leader for that; he may have his reasons. But I want the hon. member to be fair. He must understand that this is not closure, as he said. It is a limitation of time which came after a serious effort to reach an agreement on what would have been a reasonable additional length of time. I invite the hon. member to read carefully sections 75A and 75B. If he wishes to be honest, as he has always been in the past, he will recognize that our intention is not to limit his own right of speech—in fact, he is speaking now—but it is to try to have this place work in an orderly fashion.

● (1740)

Mr. McKinnon: I will be glad enough to read 75A, B and C. Perhaps the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) will read the meaning of the word “negotiate”. We have run into that word quite frequently recently. This government was going to “negotiate” with the provinces. Unfortunately for the provinces, they were given a document which showed what the government’s idea of negotiation was; it was to set them up so that a sham conference could be held which would end in failure. That is this government’s idea of negotiating. The negotiating always seems to end in closure. Whether it is called time allocation or by any other name, it still means closure.

I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis) on his speech. I thought he spent a great deal of time preparing it. I am sorry he fell prey to the NDP paranoia about the United States. Coming from B.C. I have become quite accustomed to that. I think his speech, and the bad case he had to present, was very well presented.

Before I go back to my original remarks, Mr. Speaker, I intend to talk for a little while about the situation in the House. Some of the things which have happened lately have caused me a certain amount of distress. I wish to say something about the way this government spends money, about Bill C-59, of course, and the purchase of Petrofina. Then I wish to talk about the expenditure of money in the Department of National Defence.

Yesterday I had lunch with a very distinguished journalist of some 30 years standing. I believe he told me he had been through some 11 election campaigns. His name is Vic Mackie and I believe he has a great many friends on all sides of the House. He is a competent, reliable and well-regarded journalist. He said that in his 30 years he had watched the gradual decline of the House of Commons to its present level, which is lower than it has ever been. I am sorry to say that I have only been here eight years but certainly it has been downhill all the way in so far as parliamentary procedures, debate and the importance of this chamber is concerned.

The mistrust between the sides of the House is of concern to me. There are many new synonyms for not telling the truth. Other people call this lying but we are not allowed to do so. We now have “tongue in cheek”, which is a synonym for lying. “Less than candid” is another synonym for lying. “Putting on a brave front” is another synonym for lying. “Being on show” is another synonym for lying. These are all phrases which have been used by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) when it has been found that he is saying things which are quite the opposite at different times.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan) came up with a new one yesterday. I believe it had to do with whether or not he had asked the Prime Minister of Great Britain to lay on a three-line whip, or maybe it had to do with whether she had decided she would. But it turned out that she had not said any such thing. The Secretary of State for External Affairs said that he was being “rhetorical”. This kind of sleazy deception goes on until the whole place loses in reputation.

I often think that we are very careful about deceiving the House. I think it was the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate of several years ago who argued with then Speaker Lamoureux about whether he should be banished from the House or punished in some other way for saying that a person had deliberately deceived the House, or lied to the House. It appeared all right to say that an hon. member had deceived the House, provided he did not do it deliberately. Of course, sometimes you can forgive a guy for deceiving the House because no one believes him any more. We are probably reaching that stage with this government.

I would like to point out something that happened here last week in this regard. The hon. member for New Westminster-Coquitlam (Miss Jewett) asked the Prime Minister a question about nuclear weapons. The Prime Minister in his response said: