

Time Allocation

Mr. Deans: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would not want the Hon. Member to be labouring under any misapprehension or under any misunderstanding. I was here, together with the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), during the time the New Democratic Party convention was under way, so I say to him that though he may have a good memory on this, he is lacking somewhat.

ALLOCATION OF TIME TO CONSIDER REPORT AND THIRD
READING STAGES OF BILL C-133

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Gray:

That, in relation to Bill C-133, an act to amend the Supplementary Retirement Benefits Act (No. 2), one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of each of the report stage and the third reading stage of the Bill; and

That 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business on those days, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required, for the purpose of this Order and, in turn, every question then necessary in order to dispose of the stage of the Bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): So, Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments to make on the motion now before the House. I was going to say just now that I had not intended to take part in the debate at this time, but after I heard the comments made by my colleague for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans), I could hardly refrain from rising in the House, because I found his remarks rather discouraging. In my opinion, they do not augur well for future developments in the work of the House. I also think some criticism is in order, if we believe that Parliament should be a place of debate and not a place where we only hear the ringing of bells. In my opinion, the Hon. Member's appeal to all parties to let the bells ring longer in order to waste a day's work of the House and force the Government to delay the effective date of a bill by one day, is an opposition tactic that fails to respect our free and democratic system that is the envy of so many countries throughout the world. I take a dim view of all this because once again, we are just starting an experiment in parliamentary reform, and to be successful, the experiment requires good faith and a minimum of co-operation.

The Hon. Member should realize that as a result of the economic problems facing this country and so many others throughout the world, we have fair-sized amount of legislation to deal with, and the Government's time in the House has become extremely precious. Moreover, with our new parliamentary reform, between now and the end of June the Government will have only three days a week to spend on consideration of legislation. I hope the Hon. Member realizes this, and I am sure the Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) is also aware of the implications. Practically speaking, between now and the end of June, the Government will have only three days a week in the House, since Wednesdays are for private members' business, and we also have to give the Opposition an average of

one day a week for supply, which means seven between now and March 26, and thirteen between March 26 and June 30, while there will also be an eleven-day Easter recess. There will therefore be on the average one opposition day a week and another day, Wednesday, for private members' business. For all practical purposes, only three days every week will be left to the Government to take care of its legislative program and to meet the pressing needs of the economy.

We are coming to the end of a session which has been extremely full, extremely important, and extremely long and during which many records have been set, but the end of one session implies the beginning of a new session soon after, and consequently a Speech from the Throne and a debate on the Address in reply. During the oral question period today, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) stated that a budget would probably be presented during the coming weeks or months. This means a budget speech and a budget debate, as well as other financial bills and budgetary measures in addition to those now before the House. It would therefore be child's play for the Opposition to hinder the Government, and Parliament, from carrying on its business. It is very simple, especially when the Government only has three days a week as a result of a parliamentary reform which we want to benefit the entire population, this institution and particularly every member of Parliament. However, what the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) is now doing in asking the Official Opposition to let the bells ring and waste one day opposing a bill is not the proper attitude to take under the circumstances or one which can serve as a valid test of this parliamentary reform. It is not very reassuring as to the possibility of making a full use of the parliamentary calendar and then adjourning for Easter and next summer because, in the eyes of the people, the Government will have no other choice but to sit in order to pass those measures which are absolutely essential in view of the datelines provided in our rules and in the budget measures to be announced in the near future. The Hon. Member must be aware of one fact, and I do not want to defend the Progressive Conservative Party, but while it did not play the game as the New Democratic Party wanted it today, it still did not support the bill for which we now want to limit the debate. As a matter of fact, the Progressive Conservatives came to the House and voted in favour of the adjournment motion introduced by the NDP. They therefore wanted the House to adjourn so that we could not proceed, but this was in accordance with the rules since they had to vote on a specific issue. They were free to vote one way or the other, but they came to the House to do so. If it had been their wish, they could also have made a separate agreement with me on the length of the debate under Standing Order 81, formerly Standing Order 75B. I indeed invited the House leader of the Progressive Conservative Party to agree on a limited debate at this stage since the NDP were not willing to come to such an agreement. If the Progressive Conservatives had been willing to do so, they could have agreed to this proposal. Now I am not certain they