

which I had the honour to be president of the privy council, agreed that this would be a good thing. Then when we were in opposition, the first motion we brought forward under Standing Order 43 called upon the government opposite to do precisely what they said they wanted us to do. And they said no.

We heard during the election campaign that this 18 cents tax on gasoline was dreadful. Some people would agree with that, others would not. There is still revenue to be raised in the country. But in any event, hon. members opposite were returned to office. They were returned on a condition that their oil price would be less than ours. Mr. Speaker, the ink was not dry on their commissions as cabinet ministers signed by the Governor General before we began to hear noises suggesting that their promise, their commitment, meant nothing at all.

Then, Mr. Speaker, they floated an idea on a principle which was stolen from the Hon. Robert Lorne Stanfield with respect to the indexation of income tax; that was his proposal made by him during the course of an election campaign, and it was stolen and adopted in the course of that great conversion by John Turner before he flew the coop—

An hon. Member: Do you want him back?

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): The hon. member from Newfoundland over there asks whether we want him back. I can say this: you fellows could certainly use him back; at least he understood the House of Commons from the point of view of a minister of finance coming to this chamber and coming clean with the members sitting here, which is something the present Minister of Finance has yet to understand.

In any event, what is happening now is that this commitment made by the government is being changed. They are now beginning to raise taxes. They are raising taxes through the back door. They are raising taxes on the backs of the poor and the disadvantaged. That is something I never heard anything about in the course of the election campaign. They gave the impression that if they were returned to office everything would be roses, we would wallow in prosperity. Instead, we are wallowing in unemployment and we are wallowing in a lack of candour with the House of Commons as to what direction the country is going to take.

I can say now, on behalf of this party, that if the Minister of Finance, who is in the House, will tell us upon what date he proposes to bring in his budget, we will end this debate now. We would allow that bill to proceed and there would be no point dealing with the closure motion. But he is not going to do that. He is not going to do that at all. What has he done? One thing he stole from our budget, which I thought was a sound item, was the proposal regarding the small business development bond. People are writing to us asking when they are going to bring it in. Not a whisper; no advantage to small businessmen. Farmers have been denied the advantageous capital gains measure which was in our budget. All these things have been denied while the Minister of Finance is out

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behind the international curtain in Paris attending this conference and that conference.

The cost of the oil import equalization program has now risen to \$3.32 billion from \$3.1 billion. This means we shall be faced with a deficit of \$14 billion. And we are asked to approve a blank cheque for that government, that spendthrift, wastrel government. No, Mr. Speaker, no blank cheque.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): When my friend—and he is my friend—the government House leader talks about improving the rules of the House of Commons and about shortened speeches, I say this to him: I will agree to shorten speeches, but not for nothing. I will agree to shorten speeches in return for something very important to us and to all members of this Parliament, even the silent Liberals who get up and down like trained seals to support a government which even they must have doubt about, given the breaches of promises. I want some power given to this Parliament. I want this Parliament and future Parliaments to cease to be handmaidens of the government. As the member of a government I prepared a program which would have done precisely that and, at the same time, shorten speeches. We are now some 90 days into this session and though the government House leader talks about improving our rules and shortening our procedures, streamlining them and so on, has the House committee on Procedure and Organization met? No, it has not. Parliamentary reform to that party over there, at least as they have demonstrated it, is not intended to improve the lot of private members or to make government more accountable to Parliament; it is to make Parliament more convenient for the government of the day.

[Translation]

Mr. Gourd: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to say that the opposition House leader (Mr. Baker) referred to the ninetieth day. I want to point out to the House that it is the forty-first day of the session.

[English]

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): I thank the hon. member very much. It just seems like 90 days bearing in mind the legislative wasteland we have had to deal with so far and the lack of answers we have received. But that is the position we are in. It does not lie in the hands of the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader to say that the legislation we put through last Friday, co-operating with the government, is unimportant.

Mr. Collenette: I did not say that.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): He did. He called them small bills, little bills, unimportant bills. "Small change" he just called it. If farm improvement legislation and small business legislation can be described as small bills, I think the parliamentary secretary had better look to his priorities with respect to the problems of this country.