

The government wants to chisel. It wishes to cheat the people of this country of their right to available, accessible health services. It wishes to bring down the guillotine, to limit debate on second reading of this measure. That makes the chiselling worse.

Sometimes the opposition is right, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes even my friends opposite will concede that the opposition is right. In this instance all three opposition parties are unanimous in opposing this bill. Provincial governments of all political stripes are unanimous in condemning the government. Surely that is signal enough. Surely the government House leader and government members are aware of representations of provincial governments, including Liberal provincial governments, to the effect that this bill should not be proceeded with. Surely it is patently obvious that this is a rare occasion on which a majority government should be courageous enough to withdraw a measure.

I readily admit that it takes courage to proceed with an unpopular measure. It also takes courage not to proceed with a measure, and it is patently obvious that the government should not proceed with this measure. The government's invoking of Standing Order 75c makes its refusal to withdraw all the more horrendous. At least let it have the decency to allow debate to proceed normally. But no, it will not listen. It ignores the wishes of all opposition parties and all provinces of Canada. I hope the House will defeat this attempt to impose closure.

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, in the few minutes available I shall expound a little ancient history. I am disappointed because I have been unable to speak in the debate, and am disappointed because I will not be able to speak in the remaining five hours allotted, if the motion passes. Not only am I disappointed; I resent it deeply. This afternoon I shall say concisely what I hoped to say at greater length in the normal debate. I resent being gagged and not being able to make known my views.

Mr. Abbott: Where have you been?

Mr. Lawrence: I have been in the House, attempting to get on the whip's list. Because of the widespread interest in the legislation many wanted to speak and I was unable to get on his list. I understand that. I say, for the benefit of the hon. member for Mississauga (Mr. Abbott), that I am still unable to get on the whip's list; it is too long.

Some feel that the federal level of the government is the senior level of government. Yes, I know some look down their noses at other levels of government. But let me tell you, Sir, that in many ways junior levels are more realistic and responsive simply because they are closer to the people.

I want to remind the House of the attitude taken more than ten years ago by two great Canadians on medicare. I am referring to Hon. Leslie Frost and Hon. John Robarts, and I wish, in the short time available, to tell the House what they thought.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I assure the hon. member—what's his riding—

Business of the House

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Northumberland-Durham.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): I assure the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) that he will have an opportunity to speak on the bill. I will put him on my list. He can speak in the allotted five hours.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, because the government is to gag us I shall be unable to say in full what I wanted to say in a normal debate. As I said, between ten and 15 years ago the leaders of the political parties in Ontario foretold exactly what is happening today. I well remember John Robarts saying to the people of Ontario, "You will regret the day you let the federal camel into the provincial medicare tent."

Some 15 years ago 85 per cent of the people of Ontario were covered by a privately financed medicare system.

Mr. Benjamin: Which was a mess.

Mr. Lawrence: At the same time everyone on welfare who could pass the means test was eligible for medicare paid for by the province.

An hon. Member: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps, as time is limited, the hon. member should be allowed to continue.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, plans were afoot in Ontario to make certain that 100 per cent of the population was covered by an efficient medicare plan, a plan which would not involve the waste, abuse, administrative machinery and extravagance resulting from the federal government's blackmail and coercion of the provinces. The government forced on the people of this country a plan not needed, required or wanted. Nevertheless provincial governments, aided and abetted by provincial NDP and Liberal parties, had to give in to the blackmail at that time.

Now the chickens have come home to roost. The government foisted on the people of this country a blundering, bungling medicare system. The government now sees the error of its ways and is trying to pull the rug from under provincial governments. That attempt, and its attempt to impose the guillotine, are despicable.

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, the behaviour of the government in this matter calls in question the morality of government. The government placed before the House legislation which it knew was not acceptable. It then complained when the House debated at some length—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

● (1730)

Mr. McCain: You don't like what I am saying, so you just don't want to hear any more.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr. Lawrence: Privilege! A question of privilege, Mr. Speaker—