

*Extension of Sitings*

terrible we are that we would allow this kind of behaviour in an institution such as this? It is a mockery. The kind of rhetoric that we heard just a few minutes ago is silly. It was said that we were ramming all these things through Parliament, that we were not giving Members of Parliament a chance to be heard. If Members want to take the time to read the motion, to look at what it says, they will see that we are giving them every opportunity to speak on this Bill at this time.

What about the fifth paragraph? Is it another terrible paragraph? As you know, Mr. Speaker, the standard way of dealing with any particular piece of legislation is to send it to a legislative committee. What happens in a legislative committee? A legislative committee has a restricted number of members. As a result of that, at the committee stage only a certain number of people will have the opportunity to participate in those hearings and in that work at that particular time.

What have we allowed in this particular motion? We have asked that the Bill be referred to Committee of the Whole. In other words, every Member of Parliament who wishes to take his or her seat in this place can participate in the committee stage of this particular Bill. Is that not a terrible thing for us to do? How terrible is it that we would treat the Opposition this way, that we would give all of them the same opportunity as would be afforded to the few if we had a legislative committee?

No, Mr. Speaker, it is not at all some Draconian measure. It is a very reasonable, responsible way of dealing with the legislation that we have before us and making sure that the legislation is passed in due time so that we can get on with the agenda that we as a Government want to present for the Canadian people.

The last paragraph deals with the question of Royal Assent and what will happen with this particular motion. Is it left wide open so that things will go on forever? Not at all. In fact, with the amendment that was just tabled by my colleague from Calgary, this particular motion will die the very moment that Bill C-2, the Bill relating to free trade, receives Royal Assent. Then, we can come back and begin once again to operate under the rules of the House of Commons. These are rules which this Government took so much time and energy reforming to ensure that Members of Parliament on all sides of the House, Members of Parliament who were not necessarily members of the Cabinet, would have an opportunity to have some real force, some power, some influence in this institution. It was this Government that brought in those reforms. It was this Government that cared enough for the back-

bench MPs in this House to bring forward those reforms.

This is not a government that discards the rules. This is not a government that acts in a Draconian fashion. This is not a government which hates democracy. This is a government which has demonstrated by its actions over the last four years, and will continue to demonstrate over the next four years, that it is a Government that not only cares about the people of Canada. It wants to provide an opportunity for Members of Parliament to function in this institution and to be valuable and viable workers within it.

There is another point that has to be made on this particular situation we find ourselves in today. This is not normal type of legislation. It was not introduced a few days ago for the first time. This legislation was before this House on a previous occasion just prior to the last election. In fact, it was not that the Bill was just introduced and then totally forgotten. No, that is not the case. We took that legislation through stage after stage as is required by parliamentary tradition. That Bill went through all of the stages, I believe with the exception of Royal Assent, giving members of this institution a chance to speak to the Bill, to participate in committee hearings, and to participate in several votes. It is not a new piece of legislation. We are not going into new territory. We are not opening up new ground. We are simply repeating what has happened already.

This is a government which has an agenda, a government which has some goals for the Canadian people, a Government which wants to lead this country to a strong economy, to opportunity for our young people in areas of research and development. That is what we want to get on with. There is no need for us to go through a long, drawn out exercise just simply to satisfy the needs of the Opposition. Those are needs that exist internally, not needs that have anything to do with the subject, but of political partisan needs to which I want to refer in a couple of moments.

• (1340)

In fact, the reason we are involved in this particular debate today is simply because of what is happening on the other side of the House. It has nothing to do with the question of free trade. If it did, those Members would recognize very quickly that the motion we are debating right now gives them every opportunity to express their concerns and make their points. No, that is not the real reason, it is not on the question of free trade.