

Time Allocation

[English]

Mr. Clark: Bail them out, Alastair!

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I would draw to your attention that there have been four statements from the opposition benches on this point. I would hope that before a decision is made you would permit those of us who disagree with the point of view that has been put by the other side to make our points.

An hon. Member: What is stopping you?

Mr. MacEachen: I am not particularly interested in making the procedural argument if we can reach some other conclusion.

Mr. Clark: Smile, Alastair.

Mr. MacEachen: Yesterday morning there was a discussion with party representatives in which an attempt was made to secure an agreement placing a particular time limit on the remaining two stages of the bill. I am not going into the details of the discussion because these are not usually divulged, but it was necessary for the minister, before he gave his notice, to tell the House that that attempt had failed and that it was not possible to reach an agreement. It is for that reason that the minister gave notice yesterday that he would move a motion today providing two additional days maximum for the bill.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), quite apart from his arguments, which I do not accept, has been forthcoming. The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) has said "I want to get the bill through quickly." I would say that if we can reach an agreement now for a House order which would provide that we could dispose of third reading not later than six o'clock tomorrow evening, which would give hon. members quite a bit of extra time, then I would suggest to the minister that he ask the consent of the House to withdraw his motion.

If that is not agreeable, I will have to argue the point of order and attempt to show what seems to be obvious, that we are still at the report stage of Bill C-42. There has been a fundamental fallacy argued today that the only part of a stage of a bill that is consequential is the discussion. We all know that discussion is important, but perhaps more important than the discussion is the decision.

There are at least three decisions to be taken. There is a decision to be taken on the concurrence of the report stage of the bill. If the report stage has disappeared and no longer exists, why do we have order No. 42 on the order paper reading: "Resuming consideration of report stage of Bill C-42"? Why is it there? Why is it recorded in the official record of the House, namely *Votes and Proceedings*, that votes have been deferred on the report stage of Bill C-42? If it is decided by some imagination that reality does not apply any more, and if we say the report stage is no longer before us, then it would be open to an hon. member to get up when you, sir, call the votes and argue with you, Mr. Speaker, that the

report stage has disappeared. Because if you accept the argument of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, that is exactly what will have been ruled.

It seems to me that these are the arguments that we would want to make. To show that there is a procedural foundation for our position, I wanted to make that statement. However, if it is the wish of the House, as has been expressed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton, to agree through a House order that we will finish third reading not later than the end of the day tomorrow, then with the consent of the House we will withdraw this motion and make a House order bringing that about. That seems to be in the spirit of the suggestion which was made.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I can understand why the minister feels badly about the position which the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has put him in. If I were in the position of the Deputy Prime Minister, I would feel badly too. Following along the acknowledgement that he has made about the offer in terms of time, the acknowledgement of the offer I made to discuss this matter privately—but he has chosen publicly, and that is fine with me—I do not know whether it will take that long. If that is what the minister is interested in, we in the official opposition are prepared to agree to six o'clock tomorrow. I assume it is the intention of the minister, and our agreement is based on this, not to delay consideration of the bill further and to follow along the suggestion made by Mr. Speaker that we begin third reading of the bill immediately after the vote is taken. I notice the government House leader is nodding his agreement.

● (1540)

Mr. MacEachen: Yes, to both questions.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): He has answered yes, to both questions. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, this may be one point you do not have to decide. For once, sweet reason prevails.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, it would be unfortunate if we were denied the opportunity of hearing your ruling on this point of order. I notice that Your Honour is smiling at that. One has to be careful in these statements on the floor in referring to discussions that have taken place off the floor, but I think it is open to me to say to the Deputy Prime Minister that he knows I offered at twelve o'clock today to agree to the very proposition he has made, namely that there be no closure motion but instead we accept a House order to end debate by six o'clock tomorrow night. If he had gone along with that, we would have saved this three quarters of an hour's discussion.

Mr. Pinard: Why didn't you say so yesterday morning?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I said it to the Deputy Prime Minister by telephone at noon today and it still stands. We are prepared to agree that the third reading stage end by six o'clock tomorrow.

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]