

S. O. 21

down the essential concept of serious and deliberate parliamentary consideration of legislation? Is it really signaling to us that it wants to sweep away the embarrassment it faces daily through that fundamental check and balance in our system, the daily Question Period?

We also oppose the Government's proposal to alter radically the method by which the House deals with its routine business. The Government seeks to justify this attack on one of the limited methods by which the Opposition may call public attention to the Government's legislation which it believes is harmful to the public interest, or to the Government's misbehaviour. It is doing so on the basis of one isolated incident regarding Bill C-22.

I recall that when the governing Party was in Opposition it used the same procedure involving Routine Proceedings when it was unhappy with the Bill of the Government of the day to change the system of freight rates, which we called the Crow Rate. In spite of that the Bill eventually passed, but the Government of the day did not rush into the House and attempt to change the rules on Routine Proceedings out of annoyance with the way the then Opposition, the Conservative Party which is now the Government, used the rules to get more time to consider and make the public understand the implications of the Crow Rate legislation.

The Government has given no explanation of why it has to operate differently all of a sudden. Perhaps the perspective of being temporarily on the Government side has a wonderful effect on judgment, but it certainly has not improved the judgment of the Conservative Government.

As I have said, the incident with regard to Bill C-22 was resolved in the Government's favour and has not been repeated. The usages which the Government seeks to end by modifying Routine Proceedings have been so rare that no one can justly refer to them as abuses. Similarly, I am astonished to see the proposed limitation of the length of the first speech in opposition to the third reading of a Bill. This, too, is a device which, while having been used on occasion, has not been abused. It is a particularly important device for registering differences of opinion on legislation, and, most important, because of the existence of the time allocation rules it cannot in itself derail a government program.

Indeed, this is of such insignificant bother to the Government, or should be, that the Deputy Prime Minister never once raised it in our House Leaders' discussions. We learned of the point for the first time when we read the motion which the Government tabled without giving notice late last Friday afternoon.

As I said earlier, the current rules of the House are stacked in favour of the Government. Even the most determined Opposition cannot, when the day is done, totally stop the Government from obtaining passage of its legislation unless, of course, public opinion is raised against it to such an extent that the Government itself cannot ignore it, as happened when the Government tried to cut the old age pension.

We can and on occasion must make the passage of legislation we deem to be objectionable in the public interest a difficult process, but in doing so we are carrying out a role essential in a democracy. We are ensuring that the views of the public are heard and, hopefully, considered by the Government. Similarly, when we perceive that the Government is acting contrary to the public interest we must have devices by which we can put pressure on the Government, or at least demonstrate to the public the Government's misconduct or lack of concern and consideration for the public interest.

May I call it one o'clock, Madam Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I was just about to ask the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) whether he wished to continue for a few minutes or wished to have the floor again at three o'clock.

It being one o'clock, I do now leave the Chair until two o'clock.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 21

[*English*]

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
EFFECT OF FUTURE ENERGY DEVELOPMENTS ON ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, the Brundtland Report on the Environment and Development says that energy is necessary for daily survival. Future development crucially depends upon its long-term availability in increasing quantities from sources which are dependable, safe, and environmentally sound. At present, no single source or mix of sources is at hand to meet this future need.

Choices must be made, but in the certain knowledge that choosing an energy strategy inevitably means choosing an environmental strategy.

Patterns and changes in energy used today are already dictating patterns well into the next century. The key elements of sustainability which must be reconciled are sufficient growth of energy supplies to meet demand needs; energy efficiency and conservation measures, such that waste of primary resources is minimized; public health, recognizing the problems of risks to safety inherent in energy sources; and protection of the biosphere and prevention of more localized forms of pollution.