

legitimate complaints of people who are hunters or collectors of guns is their fear that the government intends to be arbitrary in relation to them. If anything is required to reinforce these fears, the government has managed to do it by bringing in closure. It has managed to say, "Yes, you cannot believe a thing we say in this legislation."

I have spent a good part of my time in the past two months speaking to rod and gun clubs. I have been very fortunate, because there are a number of rod and gun clubs in my riding and their members initially did not see any need for legislation of this kind. But unlike the American rod and gun clubs or rifle associations, the members of our clubs are pretty intelligent people who say, "All right. If parliament wants to have this legislation, if the country or parts of the country feel that this kind of legislation is important, we are prepared to co-operate."

I am very proud of the rod and gun clubs in Canada. They have gone out of their way to look at the legislation, to make suggestions, and in most cases their suggestions have been excellent. After all, what do most of us in this place know about guns? Not a great deal. I certainly do not know a great deal about guns, about collecting guns and about the problems associated with either the legitimate or illegitimate use of guns. I welcome the kind of advice that I have been receiving from hunters and associations who know more about it than I do. I have asked for their co-operation and it has been given to me.

I am sure I am not the only member in the House who has done that. I know other members have gone to these associations and asked them to help them, to look at the legislation and to make some suggestions so that we can come out with a bill which achieves the purpose we want it to achieve; in other words, to keep guns out of the hands of the people who should not have them, without inhibiting the legitimate use of guns for sports activities and the use of guns in the hands of people who know how to take care of a gun and do not constitute any problem to society. That is really what many of us have been working to do, and we have received that co-operation.

How do I go back—I am glad I am not a member of the Liberal party; I am glad I am not one of their backbenchers—after having sought the co-operation and given assurances to the rod and gun clubs that the government means to do the right thing, and that if there is something wrong with the legislation there will be ample time in parliament to look at it and correct it and explain the government's imposition of closure? I do not have to do it, of course, because I can say I did not like it and I voted against it. But I would hate to be a Liberal trying to explain that after having gone around telling rod and gun clubs not to worry about it, this legislation will not hurt them, their feelings will be taken into account, the government wants their ideas, it wants to listen to them, and then the government brings in closure and cuts off the debate.

What is the great urgency about getting the bill through in what amounts to two working days? I suspect that the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. Holt), while she does not have much of an effect on anybody else, has had a very profound effect on her caucus. She has sold them the notion of piecework, that you come to the House under a kind of piecework system and that the more words spoken in the House of Commons, the more it costs the

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country. We are not on piecework. We get our salary whether we talk or whether we do not talk, whether we sit all year round or whether we do not sit all year round. As a matter of fact, some people over there rarely come here.

An hon. Member: That is socialism.

Mr. Saltsman: It is equality of income. It is equality of condition, rather than equality of opportunity. I do not think you should take the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway very seriously. I see there are a few people opposite who have suddenly become very articulate. They are going to speak today because they do not have to worry about the opposition. It is very handy; they brought in closure and they can kill it themselves by talking. They do not need caucus because, after all, caucus is irrelevant. I wonder whether they have said anything in caucus.

It is really disturbing—and I think every member of the House is upset, or if they are not upset they certainly should be—to see the kind of thing the government is doing with this particular legislation. I think it is the kind of legislation which the country really needs, and that is what makes it doubly sad for all of us to see the ineptitude of the Liberal party trying to bring in legislation that is required, and destroying it simultaneously.

Mr. J.-J. Blais (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I take great pleasure in participating in the debate because I hope that my few comments might tend to temper the attitude which seems to have been created by the opposition. Effectively I am a parliamentarian, and I have indicated that before. I feel that this House is a place where debate ought to take place. I am very disturbed by the suggestions made by the hon. member for Annapolis Valley (Mr. Nowlan) and by the hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge (Mr. Saltsman) that Liberal backbenchers ought not to participate in any of the debates in this House, or at least that our participation ought to be inferior, numerically, to the participation of hon. members on the other side. Surely that is a complete misconception of the role of a member of parliament. Surely hon. members opposite will agree that each and every member of parliament is equal in status in this House and should have an equal opportunity to participate—

● (1650)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blais: —in the deliberations within this precinct. I am shocked when the hon. member for Annapolis Valley says that for us to maintain that we have a right to participate equally in any debate in this House is stupid because we are dealing with government legislation. That is the depth of misconception of the role of a backbencher, whether he is from the opposition or from this party. The hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge says we have a caucus, and why do we not speak up in caucus? That, again, is an absolute misconception of the process within this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!