

*Supply*

a question on behalf of the members of my constituency to that minister and I could hold up his estimates until I got some type of answer. We know that those rules have changed. This is why we are directing attention to what has happened in the last 15 days.

It is too much to expect that we could enter this debate tonight lightly. The tone has been good, with a few exceptions, but there is very much scarred tissue from what has happened. We have to remember that much of the scarred tissue has been formed, as was said by the President of the Privy Council, not only on the members but a scar is left on the institution. That is why we put this motion forward here today, to cause ourselves to address ourselves to the problem of reform of this institution.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many things in terms of reform that I would say. Like my friend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Smith), we all know that people are trying to find answers to some of these fundamental problems, and we know that to some of them there are no fundamental answers. I am not going to talk about the perversion of the bells. We have all listened to them in the last 16 days. I was looking upon what happened in the last 16 days in a most kind way. There was a mechanical filibuster, mechanical except for the bells, ringing and clanging.

Mr. Speaker, you could pick up the newspapers tonight, you could look at your television or listen to the national news tonight, and you would see other problems in other countries where they are shooting each other, where they are killing each other, where they are blowing one another up. Bells are not bullets. We have just had a bell ringing for 16 days. It did cause some inconvenience. Perhaps it caused some auditory problems in the corridors, and also it fouled up the government timetable tremendously. But nothing was hurt fundamentally. The reason for the mechanical filibuster, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council knows full well, is that the Conservatives felt that in so many fundamental rule changes, in terms of opposition, an opposition really cannot debate now until the cows come home, in order to get the message out, and they have to "use" any device possible to try to focus attention on something which the opposition feels very strongly about.

I have been in the House for the last 16 years and I never expected those bells to ring for 16 days, and, frankly, I can envisage when they might ring for another 16 days. I do not know. I can tell you that it was not just the cause of the energy security bill. There is no opposition worth its salt that would dare to try to ring bells for 16 days, if it were just about a complicated 150 or 170-page bill, with all the implications that that bill contains. That might have been the catalyst, but I do not think there is a member in the House who believes that it was solely the bill that caused those bells to ring. It was a combination of factors, and that was the last straw.

As to the mechanical filibuster, I do not think anyone was really hurt by that. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that even my friends from the government side were a little surprised at the

focus of attention and the divided opinion as to whether this was a good thing or a bad thing in terms of whatever the people thought about the energy bill, whether they thought that the government should be brought to a halt, whether they thought that there should be an election, whether they thought that Pierre Trudeau had gone too far, whether they thought Joe Clark was great or poor. Many people interpreted that bell in their own way. All I am going back to say is that that bell was ringing for this institution. We have to address ourselves to that problem.

Mr. Speaker, part of the problem is that we do not have the English system here. I do not want the phrase "Mother of Parliaments" repeated ad nauseam in this House. We are not English. We have just had the Canada bill winding its way through the staid, stuffy House of Lords, which is an insult to Canada, as far as I am concerned. Absolutely. So let us not quibble about our Parliament, because that is not relevant to what is going on in the House of Lords regarding the Canada bill. We have a federal system of government here, not the unitary system that they have in a homogenous country like England.

Let us not get into details, following these rabbit tracks when we are hunting elephants, because that is not going to address the problem here.

Also, what they do have in England, and what we do not have here, is a transfer of power, from Labour to Conservative, and in the old days from Liberal to Conservative. We know that in every period of eight to ten years there was a change of government there and that such a change occurs much more regularly than it does in Canada. They are therefore in the position of knowing that they will be in government in eight to ten years. They will not abuse whatever rules they have because they know they will be confronted with that abuse when they come into power. Mr. Speaker, in this country we have an imbalance in anticipation of events, with the government party stalled in central Canada and particularly in Quebec, with the Tory party very strong in western Canada and west of the Lakehead. We do not only have that imbalance but we have an imbalance in the history of transfer of power.

One of the saddest things that has happened in Canada is that the Conservative Party was in power only for eight or nine months, and that meant that there was not an education process for sincere members on the government side to spend some time in opposition, to realize that in opposition it is a very difficult role to hold. When you are in opposition, boy, you will use any process, any ambit or gambit, to try to focus the attention of the public on those things that are fundamental. But you do not have to be in the opposition or the government to know what I have come to realize in this business, Mr. Speaker.

● (2050)

There is a Parkinson's law or Murphy's law, and one day after St. Patrick's day I would like to coin a Patrick's law. If I have learned anything in politics or in Parliament, it is this; the