

Government Orders

As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, we have introduced time allocation because the system in the House of Commons is that the House leaders get together to discuss what business the government has and how it will be carried out. If an agreement cannot be reached to allow so much time for debate on a certain bill, then the government has some options at its disposal. One, of course, is to allow the debate to carry on, as some people would say, *ad nauseam*. Another option is time allocation where the government specifies a certain number of hours or a certain number of days to debate the bill. Another is one that we hear all the time about closure. The government announces that it will just shut down debate. The debate carries on in the House that day until one o'clock in the morning and then the vote takes place.

It is my understanding, and I find it rather interesting, that in the British House all legislation is given a time allocation, if I can put it that way. The parties sit down and between them say that this is a very important bill, we will debate this for 20 hours. This is not so important, we will debate it for an hour, and so on. That way the order of business is controlled in a much better way in the British Parliament. It is something that I would urge this government and the opposition parties to sit down and discuss, because I think it makes sense.

One of the things that I hear from people when I go to my riding on the weekends is that they do not understand, when the government has a majority, why it cannot get its legislation through.

An hon. member: Forty-three per cent is not a majority in modern day mathematics. You're at 15 per cent now.

Mr. McDermid: Well, the NDP has a majority government in the province of Ontario and it got 37 per cent of the vote. The NDP says it has a majority government. I have heard the premier, an NDP premier, say it has a majority. So, all the cackling from the NDP at the present time is nonsense.

• (1120)

As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted by the hon. House leader of the New Democratic Party—he has a tendency to be doing that these days as he is hurting a bit—we are in a position in which we have a legislative timetable and we want to proceed with it while at the same time allowing debate in the House and

getting legislation into committee where it can be examined on a clause-by-clause basis. That is what we are doing today.

I want the public to understand clearly that we will have four full days of debate on the Petro-Canada legislation at second reading. It will then go to a legislative committee which will call witnesses, examine it on a clause-by-clause basis, and make its recommendations back to the House at report stage. Then we will have a third reading debate.

I am sure the opposition will disagree, but we feel that that gives ample time in the House of Commons to carry on a reasonable debate during which genuine points can be made by every opposition party. They have their concerns, and that is fair. They have ample time to express those concerns in this debate. They have had two days already. There will be today and tomorrow as well.

I will close my remarks because there are a lot of people who do want to debate this bill and participate in the privatization debate on Petro-Canada, but I would like to note this. This morning on Peter Gzowski's show on CBC radio there was a discussion with three people representing different parties. There was the Hon. Marc Lalonde, who is a former minister of many positions in the Liberal government. There was Rosemary Brown from the New Democratic Party, a very prominent member of that party and former member and cabinet member in British Columbia, and Dalton Camp.

The three of them were discussing Petro-Canada this morning, and it was rather interesting. Rosemary Brown asked Mr. Lalonde the question: "Since you were around when Petro-Canada was put together, was one of Petro-Canada's goals or reasons for being in existence to control oil and gas prices, the petroleum prices, at the pumps?" Mr. Lalonde said: "Never. It was never considered for that. It was never envisaged that that would be one of its responsibilities as a Crown corporation." Of course, he was expressing the government's opinion at the time it was established.

The other thing that he said this morning, which I found rather interesting, was that he has no trouble with the privatization of Petro-Canada. He feels it does not serve a public policy purpose, and that there are other areas such as the Petroleum Monitoring Agency and the Canadian Oil and Gas Lands Administration that give us