

*Government Orders*

people get to ask questions, then it is no wonder the people want to be in their ridings where they can at least have authentic conversations with people. So there is the problem of Question Period. Finally, and I say this to the hon. member for Peace River, there is the whole question of legislative planning, which is the real alternative to all this machiavellian stuff we have in this reform which enables the government to jam through bills as it pleases.

• (1630)

I will finish in a minute, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** The hon. member's time is over—expired now by two minutes. I will let him have another 30 seconds to wind up.

**Mr. Blaikie:** What we need here is a real will to do legislative planning, to have people sit down and say: "This is what we are going to give to this bill and this is what we are going to give to that bill because this is important". That takes give and take on both sides. Then we will know when we are going to deal with them instead of always dealing with things on 15 seconds notice. No wonder people have a hard time paying attention or being substantive, when you never know from one day to the next or sometimes from one hour to the next what you will be dealing with.

I think the government could have done us a great service if it had come forward with a proposal as to how we could all put our heads together and plan our life here in a way that did not subject some of us to the will of others, but instead subjected the whole process to what collectively we thought might serve the interests of the Canadian people.

**Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's discourse with great interest. He and I have had the privilege of working together on a number of parliamentary reform packages. I have always admired his work and his intellect and this time is no exception.

He began early in his remarks by indicating that he and I have had some discussions and that we do not agree on how we view this particular package. He speaks the truth. That is true.

I do want to comment on a couple of things. I am really pleased to hear him say that it is time for some reform in terms of Question Period. I hope by that he is meaning a real balance to those reforms in that we treat backbenchers on this side with, maybe not total equality, but at least giving us some opportunity to put questions.

For example, in this last week we have tried to have I think a total of eight members rise to ask questions. Out of that we got two in three days. I agree with him that we need some reforms there. I am glad to hear him say that. I want to pursue it.

The second thing he said should have been in this package was legislative planning. He should talk to his House leader. We have tried on several occasions in the two years I have been in this job to encourage just that, but it does not seem to be working. The will is not there and I hope that he would consider that.

I have a quick question for him on legislative committees. It seems to me that the McGrath task force indicated that it should be technical witnesses. I am wondering if he had forgotten that or whether he does not agree with what we had originally designed there, which is in place now.

**Mr. Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, with respect to Question Period. The member should be careful to realize that when we talk about the reform of Question Period we are not only and perhaps not even, but I take the point, talking about providing more opportunities for government backbenchers. I would see more promise in that if I had seen more willingness on the part of the government to entertain real criticism within its own ranks or within its own caucus. But only two weeks ago I had to listen to arguments about why motions which were not procedurally motions of non-confidence were motions of confidence and why everybody had to vote against medicare because the government House leader thought this was a motion of confidence.

It does not give me a lot of confidence that if we had a reform of Question Period which provided government