

Time Allocation

They say we have not had time to debate. Let me just give you the figures on second reading alone. The Liberal Party put up 22 speakers on second reading. Their critic spoke three times. Four Members spoke twice. Yet they say they did not have time to debate it. Not only did they have that many people speaking, but on the third day of second reading they ran out of speakers. Let us take a look at the NDP. Twenty of them spoke, eight of them twice, on second reading. Their critic, the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon), spoke three times. They ran out of speakers on the same night. Do you know who carried the debate to make sure it went the whole five days? The Conservative Party carried the debate. They could not carry it that night, they ran out of speakers, and we kept the debate going. Now they are moaning and groaning because we are going to limit the time for debate. That is total nonsense.

They are saying we do not have time to discuss this with the public. We are ramming it through. The free trade debate has been going on in this country now for over three years. The agreement was signed January 2 or January 3 and this legislation has been before the House since May. All we have seen since May are stalling tactics, not genuine debate, not serious study of a Bill.

I have to give the NDP Members full marks. They stood up and said what they were going to do. They were going to obstruct and do everything they can to stop the debate, not to have a serious debate. They do not want to sit down and inform the public of what this is all about and how important it is to Canada. No, they just want to obstruct.

They say we need a lot more debate. I was reading something rather interesting the other day about the debate in the British Parliament over joining the European Economic Community. The total time taken to decide that important stage of legislation dealing with the decision to enter the European Economic Community took a total of 18 hours. We have been debating this for hours and hours and hours. Some days have involved extended hours, and every day of extended hours is like two days of debate. Members opposite fail to mention that in their great moaning and groaning about the lack of time to debate.

When we finish report stage debate we will have had a total of five days of debate, three of which will be extended hours so that is basically an extra three days of debate. When third reading comes along it will probably be two days of extended debate, so that is really four days. The Opposition Members could not sustain the debate on second reading and there is no reason to think they can do it on third reading. We are into well over a couple of hundred hours of debate in one form or another, yet Great Britain debated entering the European Economic Community for only 18 hours.

Then we have to deal with the red herrings the opposition Members bring up. They say we did not have a mandate. I keep hearing we do not have a mandate to negotiate this agreement. I went back just to take a look at the commitments that the Conservative Party made during the last election on

trade matters. One of them was to develop stronger trading relations without limiting the access of developing nations. That is exactly what this agreement does. Another plank in the platform was working toward a reduction in world trading barriers. What is this all about? Reduction of trading barriers. That is exactly what we are talking about. That is what we campaigned on.

We campaigned on assisting our service industries in penetrating foreign markets. That is what this agreement does. Most of the two million new jobs needed in Canada in the 1980s will be in the service sector. We campaigned on creating a framework in which that sector can better compete worldwide. What are we talking about? That is exactly what this agreement does. We campaigned on working closely with provincial Governments and regional industries to develop local initiatives that will both increase exports and develop stronger regional economies. That is out of our campaign literature and that is exactly what this free trade agreement does. We campaigned on economic renewal in this country and part of that, I must say, is the free trade agreement. We have a mandate.

Let me just wind up by saying this. The Opposition Parties love to go around and quote the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and some of the candidates for the leadership, but since that time we have had a royal commission on the economy report to Parliament recommending free trade. We have had the Economic Council of Canada report recommending free trade. We have had the C. D. Howe Institute report recommending free trade along with other independent thinkers in this country, including the business community, both small, medium and large.

That evidence was presented to the Government. When it was, we made a decision to get an agreement. If that evidence had been presented and this Government had not acted on it, we would have heard the moaning and groaning and crying from across the House. They would be asking, why are you not paying any attention to the evidence presented to the Parliament of Canada? We did pay attention and that is why we brought in this agreement. That is why it is a good thing for Canada.

We will be debating this issue over the next period of time. Time allocation is necessary because the Opposition is not interested in debating the facts.

● (1830)

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have this opportunity to speak, particularly following the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade (Mr. McDermid). He took a lot of time to tell us that the proposal which was put before this House by the House Leaders of the two opposition Parties was unrealistic. Perhaps it was. However, we must remember that Bill C-130 is not an ordinary Bill. It is an omnibus Bill which will amend 27 other Bills.