

*Supply*

when he said that the Opposition not only has a duty to oppose and question but also the obligation to propose. The Opposition has a responsibility to try to accommodate.

I can think of some other examples besides Bill C-155. I think of the Criminal Code amendments in 1969 and 1970. I think of the War Measures Act of 1970 when attempts were made at accommodation. I am reminded of the first grain stabilization Bill when my Party, I think with deliberate honesty, put up speakers and had the same Members speak again a second and third time. We took the Government to court and it had to withdraw the Bill. When occasions like this occur only four times in 15 years, it can hardly be called abuse by the Opposition. Even under the British rules the Government may be intent upon passing legislation that is so exceptional that the Opposition has no other choice but to use whatever method it can under the rules to obstruct or prevent a Government from taking that action.

Like my colleague, the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain said, simply because the Government has the majority does not mean that it has that majority every day on every issue all year around. I am sure the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton would agree with that as a result of episodes in 1979. In fact, the most outrageous and disastrous statement of policy ever made by a Prime Minister in this country occurred in June of that year when the then Prime Minister said in a minority Parliament that he would govern as though he had a majority. I phoned the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) to ask what that meant. He said, "That means that this Parliament will not last very long." He was perfectly correct. A Grade 6 social studies student would know that if you have a minority Parliament you cannot govern as though you had a majority. I hope those who are the manufacturers of their own demise should have learned something from that, although I predict that they will be condemned to repeat it following this weekend.

If there is anything Parliament should know it is that the tail cannot be wagging the dog. No longer can heads of Royal commissions, Department heads and deputy ministers make announcements and speeches which should properly first be made by the Minister in charge in this place. Whatever happens after that is fair ball.

My final point, which I make for the benefit of the Hon. Member for Sarnia-Lambton and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader (Mr. Smith), is that omnibus Bills incite many speeches. Our written proposal to divide Bill C-155 into three parts would reduce the number of speeches on two of those parts incredibly. It could be dealt with and become law of the land by June 30. Similarly, when the Official Opposition succeeded in having the Government divide a Bill into several parts, it was amazing how quickly some of them passed. The minute the Government tries to cover the waterfront in a piece of legislation, do they expect the Opposition to sit back and vote in principle for two items which they may favour while also voting for three or four other items which they do not like? That is too much to ask and is

the reason why the word "accommodation" should be used instead of "neutrality".

I submit that that accommodation can be arranged. We could even start with Bill C-155. There are several other proposals that the Government is contemplating. It is trying to include matters in the same Bill which are not remotely related. When it does that, the number of speeches will multiply, which is a natural reaction which can be expected from any Opposition that is worthy of the name.

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a comment. I think that my hon. friend has misinterpreted what I said in the course of my remarks. I want to make sure that the record is clear.

He talked about the issue of neutral chairmen of committees. He said that he would rather deal with this under the term "accommodation". I can understand the use of accommodation between House Leaders and amongst Parties in terms of what might happen to a Bill. But I want to make it clear to him that the use of the term "neutral" or "neutrality" was used from the point of view of the attitude that would prevail by the chairmen of parliamentary committees. I did not mean that a Member of Parliament who was chosen chairman of the legislative committee from a panel of chairmen would hang his principles on the coatrack before coming into the House of Commons. In terms of the operation of a committee, the hearing of witnesses, the witnesses who would be called and the interpretation of the rules of order, he would be seen as a person who was fair, neutral, and who would not choose sides in a manner similar to how the speakership of the House has traditionally operated.

We made that proposal in the hope of accommodating that situation. It was not to say that the Member who was chosen would have no opinions about the principles that were established in the Bill. Certainly he would. However, the committee would be conducted in such a way that even those who lost the day in terms of the argument in the committee would ultimately be able to say that the committee was conducted and the work of the chairman was done fairly, evenly, and that justice was not only done but seen and felt to be done.

I wanted to make sure that my friend understood that and that the record is clear on what the special committee meant and what I meant when I used the words "neutral chairman of legislative committees".

**Mr. Benjamin:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the remarks of the Hon. Member but they fly in the face of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. It has certainly been my experience in the number of committees on which I have sat that they have been neutral in terms of their operation and interpretation of the rules. I have seen Government appointed chairmen of committees rule Government Members of the committee out of order. I remember the 1972-74 minority Parliament when the former Hon. Member for Crowfoot was chairman of the Transport Committee and I was vice chairman, that we had a majority over Government Members on that committee. On one of the few occasions that I chaired a