

### *Time Allocation*

namely, that in the Province of Ontario more than 80 per cent of the land mass constitutes northern Ontario and the more than 800,000 people who live there ought to be guaranteed a floor in the same way as provinces which are smaller in size but of approximate population. We still want to make that argument. We in Parliament still believe we can convince enough Hon. Members in this House that that argument is sound and ought to be considered.

At one point a Government Bill was brought in by a previous administration that almost became the law of the land which would have done that for northern Ontario. It failed. In the dying days of that Parliament—which lasted from 1974 to 1979—when unanimous consent was required, it was withheld by one Hon. Member and that Bill failed to become law. We would not have this problem now if that Bill had been accepted.

Members of Parliament from northern Ontario still want to make their case in this House. I believe we have allies on the opposite side of the House as well as on this side. We would like to hear those supporters make their case and we would like to convince the Government that it should change its mind.

I want to be very clear that when we talk about closure or time allocation, I do not want to be a ranter or a raver, as has happened in some speeches in the past with respect to time allocation. I am not unalterably opposed to the use of this parliamentary device to bring the House of Commons to a moment of decision. I am not at all opposed to that. After all, it was a Liberal Government which brought in the change in the parliamentary rules to allow for the use of what was then Standing Order 75(C). But when did we use Standing Order 75(C)? We used it when all of the arguments had been made and remade, argued and reargued.

**Mr. Nickerson:** Just like this time.

**Mr. Penner:** Not like this time at all. We used time allocation when we had a Government which did not have a huge, vast majority. When we have a large number of Members of Parliament in the two opposition Parties—or three opposition Parties as the case has sometimes been—and arguments are being repeated, that is the time when closure or time allocation can be introduced. For example, if both sides of the House were almost even, if there was a majority of seven or eight Hon. Members, and debate on an important Bill had been going on for several weeks, perhaps then the Government could bring in time allocation. While there may be some perfunctory protest, we could understand that there comes a time when a decision can be made. But when there are 70 Members of Parliament on this side of the House—30 members of the New Democratic Party and 40 members of the Liberal Party—and time allocation is used excessively, as has been done in recent months by this Government, then we have to start to ask the question, why is time allocation being used excessively?

When the voters of Canada gave the Conservatives such a massive majority, why, then, would they not, in the parliamentary tradition, allow a smaller Opposition the opportunity to

express its views on very important Bills? I want to illustrate that we have not had that opportunity. Let us take a Bill which is so important to the taxpayers of this country as the bank depositors Bill. I am sure you followed that closely, Mr. Speaker, but did you know that we did not, even at second reading stage, debate the main motion? Time allocation was imposed before we had finished debating the amendment which was introduced by my Leader. The main motion had not even come to the House for debate and time allocation was brought in. Does that not bother Hon. Members opposite? Are they not wondering what the Government they support is doing?

Let me give another example. There was a wimpy little Bill brought into this House. It was hollow and a sham. There was no substance to it at all. It was the employment equity Bill. Members on this side of the House were beginning to get the message to the country and to all Hon. Members that there was no employment equity in that piece of legislation at all. Time allocation was imposed on it. Why was time allocation imposed on it? Because the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) was becoming embarrassed by the truth.

• (1150)

Again, I am not always opposed to time allocation. When the Government brought in time allocation on Investment Canada, I think it was right to do so because to do away with FIRA and substitute it with Investment Canada was something Government members said they would do during the election campaign. They said that they did not believe in protecting the economy of Canada from foreign ownership and control. That was their policy. I do not agree with it. In fact, I am opposed to it. However, they brought in time allocation because that legislation was central to what the Conservative Government stands for. They said that they believed in opening up Canada and that if something looks good and is for sale, they should let anyone in the world buy it. I do not agree that they should sell things at fire sale prices. However, the Government decided to move closure because that policy was absolutely central to its program. It was part of its manifesto, as much as manifestos exist in this country.

By the way, I hope someday someone will bring in a law that provides that when a Party runs in an election, it would have to have something resembling a manifesto, not just 380 loosely strung out promises. There ought to be some central policy for which a Party stands. The only policy I was able to detect during the last election campaign was that government Members wanted to open up Canada. They brought in Investment Canada and they brought in time allocation on its legislation.

How can Government members justify bringing in time allocation on Bill C-74? It is not a Bill that is in any way central to the executive branch of Government. It is not part of a Conservative Government program or platform that was introduced to the country. It is not even a matter for the