

● (1620)

Mr. Hugh A. Anderson (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) with great interest. Let me set the record straight, since I am sure the hon. member would not wish to mislead the House. He suggested that the government withdrew the peace and security measures because of the strong position of those noble members opposite.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I did not say that.

Mr. Anderson: That is not why the measure was withdrawn. We had begun a new session and legislation previously on the order paper or in committee died, as the hon. member knows. The hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) alluded to Indira Gandhi and, comparing our Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to her, referred to him as "Indira Trudeau". The hon. member has his own point of view, no doubt, and recognizes the difference between the leader of my party and his. I prefer a leader who adopts a position to one who goes around crying, "The sky is falling." Comparing the hon. member's leader to "Chicken Little" may not be much of a compliment. I say this because it is well recognized in this country that at least my party takes a position. I wish the opposition would adopt a position on a bill like this. Having listened to 13 hours of debate, I am still not sure what they are saying. What is their position on this legislation? Some hon. members opposite have agreed with the 12-week qualifying period. Others think it should be 8 weeks in one part of Canada and 12 in others. Before this debate ends, I hope the official opposition will take a definite position on this bill so that we may know where they stand.

As the maritime member on my side of the House suggested, allocation of time with respect to most legislation could be beneficial for backbenchers on my side. We have been told ever since 1974, "Don't disturb the people on the other side; don't get them aroused. It looks as if two or three more will speak, after which debate on the bill will end. Therefore, you sit down and be quiet." This is what we have been told when the House has considered legislation. As the hon. member said, a time allocation motion gives us one of our few chances to speak, for then we know we shall not hold up the debate.

Mr. Rodriguez: Who stops you?

Mr. Anderson: We all know this is so, even though the official opposition may not think so. We can participate in debate on a closure motion. Generally, members on my side suffer by being constrained. It is not that we do not wish to participate.

Mr. Johnston: You don't suffer. Don't give us that.

Mr. Anderson: We wish to participate in debate, but are told to be quiet. People in the gallery and people across Canada may not know this. As a rule we cannot participate because there is so much talk emanating from the side opposite me.

Mr. Paproski: Come on! You are muzzled on that side.

Motion under S.O. 75C.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Which is why you talk that way now.

Mr. Paproski: Keep quiet, and you'll be made a parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Anderson: Standing Order 75C provides for allocation of time, not for closure, if I may echo the words of the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik). I hope what is happening in this House will be reported responsibly. The bill must still pass the committee stage. To be honest, I sometimes wonder about the committee stage. For example, this morning approximately 20 members attended the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence. The Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Jamieson) appeared before the committee, and we spent 20 minutes questioning him and 1½ hours arguing procedural matters. For the better part of 1½ hours the committee debated a motion moved by an opposition member while the minister just sat there. We had no opportunity to obtain information from him. That is why I wonder about the committee system. Sometimes it seems as if we spend more time arguing about procedure than questioning witnesses or ministers.

In future, when ministers appear before committees I hope the members on my side, as well as in the opposition, will make full use of the opportunity to ask questions. Let there not be a repetition of this morning's situation, for we wasted 1½ hours of the time of the minister and his officials while we argued points of procedure. One can see why the people of Canada suspect we do not use our time well. I could cite many examples to show how we waste our time.

Hon. members opposite seem to object most to the clause of the bill which will extend from 8 to 12 weeks the qualifying period of employment. Let me quote some statistics contained in "Highlights and Information Papers on the Employment and Immigration Reorganization Act." At page 6 the following statement appears:

A survey indicated that 64 per cent of all insured persons with eight to eleven insured weeks in 1974 had dropped out of the labour force by March, 1975. This drop-out rate, significantly higher than for any other group of insured persons, indicates the unstable pattern of labour force attachment of 8-11 weekers.

It goes on to say at page 7:

Analysis of the characteristics of the eight-to-eleven week group of claimants shows: 80 per cent have no dependents; approximately 50 per cent are under 25 years of age; many are secondary workers (working wives and youths living at home) who belong to families with incomes in the middle to upper range.

Let us compare our system with the American system. In the United States the average qualifying period is 25 weeks. Nowhere in that country is it as low as 8 weeks or even the proposed 12 weeks.

Mr. Rodriguez: But they do not have our high unemployment, either.

Mr. Anderson: As well, maximum benefits in Canada of \$133 a week escalate automatically with inflation. I wish hon. members would examine the United States system. I ask hon. members to consider this important question: If we increase the qualifying period from 8 to 12 weeks, will we help to cure