

Plant Breeders' Rights

thing he did because he believed in John George Diefenbaker, as a lot of people in that part of the country did.

The reason they believed in John Diefenbaker in 1957 is because of what happened in this House when an arrogant Liberal government at that time invoked closure for one of the few times in Canadian history in the pipeline debate. John George Diefenbaker led the charge, not only in this House but in the country. There were a lot of people from all kinds of different philosophies who followed him.

That is why I am saying to these Hon. Members opposite that their use of closure is starting to remind me a bit of an acquaintance of mine whose marital philosophies are other than mine. I was asking the acquaintance, in a discussion of our mutual lives, why it was that he did not feel guilty in the course of the romances he pursued. He said that the first and second time he felt a little guilty, and by the third time it was pretty well passing. He no longer felt guilty about the kind of relationships he was carrying on. I guess I could understand that. I knew the person fairly well.

That is the way the Members opposite have become about closure. They have used it once, they got away with it in free trade, so all the way through this session it is closure, closure, closure. It is not a crisis like the pipeline debate was. Nobody is arguing that. I think the fall of this Government in the polls—we are not high either, but the Government has fallen very dramatically—is because of the perception that is spreading through the country that there is an element of arrogance and shoving things down people's throats about this Government that they just simply do not like.

I could understand why closure was being brought in if there were some kind of crisis in the country. If we had just got through this seeding season and the farmers had run out of seed, and there was not good seed for the people to sow, then there would be a crisis in the country that would perhaps justify taking a radical measure like this on an issue which is not particularly earth-shaking as far as the general health of the country is concerned, but it is an important symbolic issue. There is no crisis. We do not need new seed next year or the year after. We are doing very well.

Is there a crisis in production? There is no crisis in production. We had a problem with drought last year and we are still working out the details of that. Canadian farmers can produce. The Canadian research establishment has done very well for us. We run one of the most modern and efficient farm economies in the world. That was with public seed production. That was with institutions like the Canadian Wheat Board. That was with a country elevator-based railway system. I do not think those ideas are particularly old fashioned. I think those ideas just do not fit in with the philosophy of Members opposite.

• (2320)

Another thing that would have called for closure is if there had been such a crisis that it required this kind of radical action. If the farmers themselves were clamouring for this legislation, it might have been justified. However, I have not seen any farmers marching on Parliament Hill lobbying for plant breeders' rights. Not one farmer from my constituency has written me a letter saying that he wants plant breeders' rights, and there are some former Conservatives in that constituency as well as plant breeders.

The Government says that it has consulted with farm groups. One of the authors of the very good report on Indian post-secondary education which came out tonight had a chance to see for himself what the people thought of the Government's consultation process. That is just one example, but he must also have talked to farmers who were members of the Alberta Wheat Pool, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the Manitoba Wheat Pool, Unifarm or the National Farmers' Union. Farmers were not pleased when the Government took oats out of the Wheat Board. They did not think that they had been consulted.

We heard about pensioners being consulted on taxing away 100 per cent of the pension benefits, something which discriminates against them because all income should be treated alike. Why should pensions be treated any different from dividends, for example? The Government said it had consulted with pensioners.

Mr. Fisher: Couldn't name one, though.

Mr. Funk: My hon. friend points out that when asked to name one, that was the end of that argument.