

intended to replace the universal family allowance system.

We have submitted a brief last summer, in the middle of July, a time of the year when almost every one is away on holiday and women are hardly available to examine such a major legislation because of family obligations and the little time afforded them to prepare a brief. We have had to scramble just to have it ready.

[English]

Senator Barootes: Would you entertain a question as to where that brief was presented in July when you told us the committee was not sitting?

Senator Frith: That is not what they said. They said:

[Translation]

We submitted a brief . . .

[English]

Certainly I can explain that. As with the other memoir that I referred to, they submitted it as a written brief, having had no opportunity to present it in the way in which they wanted. A very appropriate question.

[Translation]

We have had to scramble just to have it ready on such short notice, sacrificing many angles and nuances which would have been important in our argumentation. We are amazed at such an undemocratic procedure.

We hope that, as leader of the Opposition, you will be able to convey this to the committee in order to allow us to go to Ottawa before this bill fraught with consequences for women and children, especially those who live in problem families, is passed.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Sincerely,

[English]

Honourable senators, let us take her words to heart and do our job properly. This might turn out to be one of the final chapters of the work of the present Senate, but let all of us, government and opposition members alike, show that when we talk about a fair and responsive Senate, we mean what we say.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I do not intend at this stage to enter into a discussion of the substance of this bill. That has been done very capably by its sponsor, Senator Spivak. I will simply say in parentheses, however, that we have reason to believe that this measure has widespread support in the country precisely because it is better targeted to those in need. I rise for the purpose of saying a word about process, since the question of process in the House of Commons occupied so much of the attention of the Leader of the Opposition in his speech.

Honourable senators, we are now at second reading of Bill C-80. It is, I agree, an important piece of legislation. The agenda of the Senate is not very burdensome at the moment. There is only one other piece of major government business before us; that is Bill C-55, which tomorrow will be at report stage and heading for third reading.

Therefore, there is plenty of time to carry on the debate on second reading of Bill C-80 and I assure the honourable senator that the government has no intention whatsoever of trying to bring in a time limitation to curtail debate at second reading of this bill. We can sit evenings, we can sit Friday morning, we can sit all next week. There is plenty of time to hear from every senator, Liberal or Conservative, who wishes to be heard in the second reading debate on Bill C-80. Let me set the mind of the Leader of the Opposition to rest on that point. Everyone who wants to be heard at second reading of Bill C-80 can be heard. There is plenty of time.

Assuming that the bill receives second reading and goes to committee, it will go to the Committee on Social Affairs under our friend Senator Kinsella of New Brunswick.

I presume that after we have dealt with Bills C-55 and C-80 the Senate will adjourn and the committee will begin its consideration of Bill C-80. Committee members will not have attendance in the Senate chamber to distract them. They will be able to sit morning, noon and night for as long as it takes to deal properly with Bill C-80.

Senator Frith: And suiting the convenience of witnesses who might not be able to attend in series, 24 hours a day.

Senator Murray: Of course, but a witness who cannot attend in the morning can attend in the afternoon or possibly at night. The honourable senator, than whom there is none more courteous, will, I am sure, with the assistance of honourable senators, Liberal and Conservative, on the steering committee, want to hear a good cross-section of views from a good representation of witnesses who express an interest in coming forward. All of that can be done. If the bill is reported, then we will deal with it at third reading.

My point is that there is plenty of time to deal with the bill. The only thing that we in the government ask is that the Senate get on with it and deal with it. After the committee hearings have been held, I would expect to ask the Senate to return here to deal with the report stage and third reading.

I hope that will set at rest the mind of the honourable Leader of the Opposition and the minds of any others who may have feared that we were going to try to curtail debate on second reading of this bill. On the contrary, we look forward to hearing the contributions of other honourable senators on this bill and we will take whatever time is necessary to do so.

Senator Frith: Hear, hear! And we will certainly look forward to how the committee treats witnesses with regard to their convenience in attending, in a way that the House of Commons committee did not.

Hon. L. Norbert Thériault: Honourable senators, I will not bore you with a long speech. I am glad to hear the Leader