

Government Orders

that a member be now heard, all of which required votes and all of which took up time in the House.

There has not been a fair time for members in this House to express their views on this bill. We in this party in particular have indicated a willingness—indeed a great interest—in debating this bill so that we can point out to Canadians the faults of this legislation and that it is not right.

What is happening here is that for the eleventh time in this Parliament the Minister of Justice is proceeding to bring in closure on a bill at one of the stages. Not only is it the eleventh closure motion, there have been three uses of time allocation orders on two stages at once of various bills. This will be the fourteenth time, assuming the government votes this through as its supporters tend to do, that debate has been curtailed in this Parliament. No other Parliament in Canadian history has ever been subjected to this kind of arrogant abuse by the government.

• (1640)

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, the closure rule, as my hon. friend from Kamloops has indicated, was not designed for government abuse of the House of Commons. The closure rule was designed to bring an orderly end to protracted debate.

I further state that this closure rule has been used on repeated occasions, on some of the occasions in the 11 that I have mentioned on the second day of debate. In fact on a great number of them it has been used on the second day of debate. Closure notice has been given on day one and applied on day two.

I say that the continuous abuse of this rule constitutes an abuse of the traditions of this House as outlined by the hon. member for Kamloops. I invite Your Honour to so find and rule this motion out of order.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms. Langan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The speaker before me in outlining his version of what took place yesterday indicated that when he asked for unanimous consent to have the debate continue there

was not one New Democrat in this House when the government member refused to give unanimous consent.

I happen to have been in this House, along with a number of my New Democrat colleagues. I would like to make it clear to him that that was the case.

Mr. Speaker: I want to respond to the hon. member. It is probably not a point of order. There is a general tradition that under some circumstances the Chair will allow a member to make an intervention.

However, I want to make it very clear that her alleged point of order, and perhaps a complaint, is not a point of order and does not assist me very much with the very careful arguments put by the hon. member for Kamloops.

The Minister of Justice has the floor.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, for a few minutes I want to review the issue, as we see it, from the government's side and respond to my hon. friends' arguments.

We see this issue as a question of the rights of the government to govern and the opposition to oppose within the context of debate. I want to make some references to points that are in the records in order to support my argument.

First, I wish to refer to Beauchesne's fifth edition where it reviews the issue and responsibility of a parliamentary government. Citation 1, which is right at the start, puts it this way:

1. The principles that lie at the basis of English parliamentary law, have always been kept steadily in view by the Canadian Parliament; these are: To protect a minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority; to secure the transaction of public business in an orderly manner; to enable every Member to express his opinions within limits necessary to preserve decorum and prevent an unnecessary waste of time; to give abundant opportunity for the consideration of every measure, and to prevent any legislative action being taken upon sudden impulse.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out to you that we are not acting on the basis of sudden impulse when we move the goods and services tax bill. This initiative has come after five years of ample and full debate.

Bill C-62 has not been foisted upon Parliament suddenly. The issue has been the subject of technical papers,