

*Government Orders*

platform is going to go down the tube if the bill is defeated, but debate it here on its merits as we see fit.

I will give you an example. I am an abolitionist. I am opposed to capital punishment on many grounds, but I know that if a bill came to this Chamber, under what I am suggesting is the proper legislative approach, that it will in all likelihood pass. I would still vote against it, but when I went home I would have to assume total responsibility for the position I took.

I could not say it was party policy. I could not say that the New Democrats, generally speaking, across the country, as I understand it, are opposed to capital punishment. I would have to say: "I am sorry, Derek Blackburn, your member of Parliament, is opposed to capital punishment. Even though I know that the will of the nation was expressed in that vote, I went against the will of the nation and the majority. I am prepared at this point in time with the upcoming election to take my chances." That to me is real democracy. That is one example. There are many, many other examples we could use.

I am quite certain that I would not be happy with the outcome of the vote, but I would have to accept it just as our citizens today are anything but happy with the way we legislate up here on many occasions and they are getting tired of sitting back and saying: "Hey look, I don't like what you are doing, but I guess there is nothing I can do about it."

My friends opposite know and we know on this side of the House that the citizens of this country are saying we are tired of not being listened to. We are tired of exercising democracy every four years by going to the ballot box and then it is gone. Nobody is listening to what we think is right. Nobody is listening up there in Ottawa to what we think the country should be doing or where it should be going.

One very large reason for this is because we are not legislators anymore. I am quite convinced that on any given day of any given year regardless of what party is in power, about 20 people run this country. We have executive democracy. We have allowed this country to go from absolute monarchy over the centuries to an abso-

lute prime ministership as long as there is a majority sitting on the government side.

If I feel frustrated sitting on this side, I am only imagining how I would feel if I was sitting over there. I am not trying to be mean when I say that. There must be complete and utter frustration on both sides of this House because I feel it day in and day out.

I want to give you an example. I went across the street the other day to one of our Parliament Hill offices to have a fairly simple bill—there is a series of private members' bills, that I want to introduce some time in the next session, but the one that I discussed with the woman across the street, the law officer, was a fairly simple one. She said it will take at least two months and possibly four before she would have it for me. I was absolutely shocked. I thought maybe a couple of weeks. I said: "Well, what's the problem?" She said: "I am the only one at the present time employed to draft private members' public bills. There is one other vacancy in the office, but it hasn't been filled." I said: "I wonder how many law officers are employed by the Crown to draft government bills." She said: "a little over 1,700."

• (1210)

That gives us a very realistic aspect of what is wrong in this House. We have 1,700 law officers of the Crown—give or take 100—whose primary responsibility it is to draft legislation for the government. We have one law officer to take care of all the private members' public bills needs in this Chamber. That really should be a question of privilege. I think it is a legitimate question of privilege because that prevents me from carrying out a legitimate function of my office. I will leave it at that for the time being.

Another aspect of what is wrong around here is that committees have no power and no clout. We cannot threaten senior civil servants. When I say that we cannot threaten I mean that we cannot order senior civil servants to do what we think is right.

I went to a meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence on estimates—I am no longer a permanent member of that committee—a couple of weeks ago. Estimates of \$13.2 billion this year for defence, I believe. I had seven minutes in which to