

An hon. Member: I hope the hon. member is not referring to it as closure, which is a different rule.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I think the deputy House leader of the government should know better than to intervene on something that is not point of order. Let me answer it this way: A gag by any other name is still a gag.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): The effect on the bill is going to be just that. My friend says there has been an inordinate period of time to debate major problems facing the country in this House. Of the nine days, six of those are long when we sit during the day and the evening; three of those days are short days. When we have that period of time to debate such a major matter, as the government House leader says it is, then I think the government are being unreasonable. They are going to be criticized very badly for that kind of attitude.

In addition, the government introduced a budget in March, 1977. It was going to do wonders for the country; people were going to be employed; the industries would be working well; there would be all these things. Yet this House sat from March, 1977, through to August, 1977, and did not debate on one occasion the bills that arose out of that great economic statement, so-called.

Now, having come to the House when the country did need a budget, and having bootlegged into the throne speech what the government called a major economic statement but what most Canadians are calling a farce and a fraud, thereby depriving members of parliament of a normal budget debate, the government terminates the debate in nine days. I think if the minister checks the precedents he will see that a period of nine days for what the government has termed a budget is not a long period at all, considering one would be dealing with the budget and legislation arising therefrom.

Take a look at this bill, Mr. Speaker. It contains 212 pages of legislation. There are a great number of sections in this bill. It is a tremendous piece of legislation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I mean, in volume of paper used, not in terms of what it is going to do for this country. That is the issue. It covers billions of dollars of revenue of this government, and the government decides parliament cannot debate that. It decides that nine days is too long a period for parliament to debate it. That is utter nonsense.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): This is the issue respecting which Parliament is now being gagged because the government has become somewhat uncomfortable in terms of this economic debate. The members go home, see their own people, see the concerns in the community and just how little is being done.

Time Allocation for Bill C-11

The hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Foster) talks. He has mines closing in his area. In Newfoundland, mines are closing. The pulp and paper industry is flat. The electronics industry is in trouble. The whole manufacturing sector of this country is in trouble. Canadians are asking this parliament to deal with economic matters. When we attempt to deal with economic matters, this minister today moves with the obvious support of the hon. member for Algoma who is making one of his greatest speeches just sitting on his rear end—

An hon. Member: Don't sputter.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): This government proposes that we cut off that kind of debate. There is no way that can be justified. The minister in his submission tried to make it appear that the opposition was holding up this bill. That is not quite true. During the course of the debate there have been some Liberal members speaking each day, except for the last two days. Why are they speaking? They are just as dissatisfied as everyone else—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):—with respect to the operation of their government. The hon. member for Halton (Mr. Philbrook) criticized the government, quite properly, and I replied to him in the course of the debate. He criticized the government and said what a ridiculous attitude they are adopting toward this country, toward jobs and the future of Canadians. There is no doubt about it, by whatever criteria you view it, Mr. Speaker, whether it is the meanest of the Canadian standards that have been applied to debates of this nature, this has been a short debate—what the government itself has called a major economic bill but which may be somewhat doubted by Canadians in terms of that description. It is a short debate wherein Parliament has already been denied the appropriateness of the government coming forward and introducing a budget where members of parliament, not just the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien), adequate or inadequate as the case may be, but all members can examine in a constructive, critical way, the economic program of the government. The government has failed to bring in a budget, and then has relied on the throne speech debate to bootleg in what they choose to call a budget, and now call a halt to the debate within a very short period of time.

The ministers of the Crown have spoken. They have tried to use this in a surreptitious way in terms of promoting their own causes. If this is the attitude the government is taking to parliament, to shorten debate on the major problem concerning Canadians, then I think the government ought to be ashamed of itself. I think the people of Canada are suddenly going to have a new opportunity because the proceedings of this House are now televised across the nation and people can see the attitude of this government.

There are towns in Canada where plants are closing. This is what is happening in Canada. There are young people of this country who cannot get a job. These are the people we have educated and told the world would be their oyster if they