

Extension of Sittings

● (1320)

I wish every Canadian had the opportunity, as I have, to sit in this House for a week and see it from this view. It is a different view from the one you see on television. I know if every Canadian had a chance to sit in this House for a period of time, they would have a different view of the Conservative Party. Certainly the Conservatives would be having a different view of this House because they would not be on the government side but on the opposition side and in much fewer numbers.

I have watched the games and the charades being played in this House and it is disappointing. It is disappointing to see Standing Orders being changed seemingly on a moment's notice. This action being taken by the Government not only tramples on the rights of Members on this side of the House, but on the rights of Members on all sides.

We have in this House, I believe, 127 new Members from all Parties. They wish to speak on this issue. Certainly the trade issue was the key issue in the last election. This is the earliest time, 21 days after the election, that a House has been called back. It is very difficult for new Members. First, it is difficult to get used to the rules and procedures of the House. There are new offices to set up, staff to hire, and constituency problems to address. Not only myself and other Members on this side are having difficulty; I know of new Members on the Government side who are having the same difficulty. They have not had an opportunity as in past Parliaments to establish themselves, to get their constituencies set up, and to start dealing with the problems every Member has to deal with.

Mr. McDermid: On the job training.

Mr. Laporte: It is a new and difficult experience. During the last campaign the trade issue was the most dominant issue. Certainly people in my riding have a number of concerns. They are concerned about the Wheat Board. They are concerned about the future of agriculture and what is going to happen to rural Saskatchewan in the years that lie ahead. Moose Jaw itself, a small city of approximately 36,000 people, is in danger of losing one of its manufacturing plants, that of CanaDay's. That plant employs some 150 people making dress slacks, one of only two in western Canada. Certainly when the tariffs come off textiles, when the trade Bill goes through, and our dollar at some point will very likely reach a par with the American dollar, our advantage is going to be lost. If that happens, CanaDay's is very likely to close. That is something

Moose Jaw cannot afford and something which the people in Moose Jaw do not wish to happen.

We are having a difficult time with the Devine provincial Government in attracting business to Moose Jaw, and we can certainly not afford to lose an industry of that kind. I hope that during the trade debate itself I will have an opportunity to go into detail on that matter.

There seems to me to be no need to be rushing through this legislation, to be forcing this Bill through in such a short period of time. The Americans have said that there is no magic in the January 1 deadline. The deadline can be extended a reasonable amount of time. Certainly it would seem logical to me as a new Member to follow the Standing Orders of the House, to follow the normal procedures, and to allow for an open debate, especially with almost half the House being composed of brand new Members. They would have the opportunity to deal with this debate in the House and with their new constituencies. It seems very unfortunate and I am very disappointed over the manner in which the Government chooses to proceed in this matter.

I would also like to state that I am very proud to be a member of this Party, the New Democratic Party, especially after seeing the way the Conservatives have acted this week in the House. I am very proud to be a member of a Party that had as its Members people like M. J. Coldwell, J. S. Woodsworth, Tommy Douglas, and Stanley Knowles. They believed in and stood up for the fundamental principles of democracy. They believed in fair play and open debate. They also stood up for the right of others to express different points of view. I am also very proud to be a member of a Party with a Leader like the Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent) who has been following those footsteps and traditions.

In closing, I do hope that in future the Government will take a page from our Party's history book and when Members opposite look at Mr. Knowles sitting in the House, they will remember that tradition of democracy and apply it to this House in the days and months and years to come.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak for the first time in this new Parliament. I want to begin by congratulating you and your colleagues who serve us so ably and so well in the chair. It is a difficult job and we as Members traditionally have appreciated it, and certainly this case is no exception.