

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to inform the hon. member that his ten minutes have expired. Will the House allow the hon. member for Mississauga to ask a question?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): With the unanimous consent of the House the hon. member for Mississauga may put a question to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles).

Mr. Broadbent: Make it a good one.

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, it may not be a good one but, as a relative newcomer, I want to ask the hon. member, as one who has been in the House as long as he has, is he saying it is an infamous act, after a debate has taken place in which exhaustive interventions have been made by almost every interested member of the opposition, that the government should never be permitted to bring the issue to a vote? Does he think the government should let those interventions go on and on in order to exhaust the government? Does he deny the right of the government to bring this matter to a vote ultimately?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, under the rules the government has the right to do it, and the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) said today that the government is taking its political responsibility in this matter. I say to the hon. member for Mississauga and I say to the government that there are times in human history when minorities are right. I think the minority in this House is right in saying that Bill C-68 ought to be withdrawn.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): That is why we are opposing this motion under Standing Order 75C.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, it is rather reluctantly that I take part in this debate, since the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) is now putting this House in a bind by having recourse to Standing Order 75A, 75B and 75C which had been passed by the House or rather imposed on the House by another motion of closure in July 1969.

Today the government uses this procedure to impose a bill which Canadians do not want, not any more than the provinces, and on which it has not been able to obtain unanimous consent of the House. Here is the real situation: the government is doing it alone with Bill C-68, by imposing by force its financial participation in a very important program, by limiting it now at 50 per cent and at less in future years. Thus the government imposes its law, it withdraws from a program it had forced upon the country, and it is taking this decision by imposing its will upon the House of Commons and using the muzzle, the guillotine.

For the moment, neither the government nor any government member can tell whether at least one province has given its full support to the passing of Bill C-68. In fact, discussions have not even begun. No province has given its agreement. The federal government does not care anyway.

Business of the House

They are the federal government. They go over the provinces, and we see now that they will go over Parliament, and that after five hours of discussion, three quarters of which will be taken up in procedural debates, this legislation will have to be passed by this Parliament. Why? Because the government rely on their parliamentary majority, but they cannot pretend that they represent the majority of Canadians. That is not true, Mr. Speaker.

In that way, democracy is altered. The Liberals represent only 47 per cent of the electorate, and thus the majority of the population is on the opposition side. Whether the electoral system makes them the majority party is a different matter. That is why we find ourselves today passed the point of no return, that is we are simply facing closure. Let the provinces fend for themselves! It is up to them now to find the money required to finance the difference in the medical care cost, no matter whether or not it is the federal government which put them into this mess.

When the government introduced the anti-inflation legislation, it ordered a freeze on one item, among others, in order to put money aside because, it said, we had to save money. Well, what did it freeze? Family allowances. To save \$200 million, the biggest budget cut was made at the expense of children. Now they are going to cut the social affairs budget again. What is rather surprising is that the government keeps changing its position on social security and this unilaterally. It strictly imposes its rule.

● (1600)

Mr. Speaker, that kind of attitude is non-parliamentary and non-democratic. Once the guillotine has fallen, that's it, we are soon going to vote this afternoon, and with the majority, the force of numbers, Bill C-68 will certainly be adopted. We will see the usual scenario being played. We will hear government members burst into applause. But the day those same members and ministers are on the opposition side, they will be the first to use the same language we are using today.

Mr. Speaker, almost everything is allowed in this House except when it comes to preventing a member from talking on behalf of his fellow citizens. Standing Orders 75(A), (B) and (C) are infamous since they deprive members of the House from the right to express their opinion. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to take very much time talking about this since several other members will certainly want to state their views. The Liberals are arrogant. They impose their legislation on us. And when something is not to their liking, they resort to heckling, shouting and applause to impose their legislation.

A few years ago, they tried to make us believe that medicare was extraordinary—I know this since I was in the gallery at that time as secretary to the leader of the Social Credit Party. I recall that time very clearly. Today the government is using closure simply to withdraw unilaterally its participation in the financing of the health insurance scheme. In the next election, these same Liberals will use fine sounding words to proclaim that because of them Canada has the best and the greatest social security system in the world.

Mr. Speaker, this is nonsense. The attitude taken by the President of Privy Council in imposing his social security legislation, the attitude taken by Prime Minister Trudeau