

*Time Allocation Motion*

to this bill. His answer was something like this, "Oh, no; just a few insignificant members." That quotation may not be quite accurate, but it is the essence of what the minister said.

**Mr. Faulkner:** It is not even close to accurate. It is a distortion. Let us see the transcript.

**Mr. Friesen:** I have been wondering ever since if some of those "insignificant members" are on the government backbenches. That is an indication of the minister's respect for parliament and the parliamentary process.

This is an issue we cannot avoid. It is censorship not only in the legislation but now in the process by which we come to this legislation. I am waiting to meet the 22 witnesses who will come before the committee. I trust there will be a lot more who will be added to the list. I am thinking of some who I am sure are not on the list. I hope the government is open enough to accept suggestions and will include witnesses who may not yet be on the list. I hope it will extend the courtesy of open debate and examine this legislation in that light and spirit so that we will have the best possible legislation for the people of Canada.

**Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher):** Mr. Speaker, in speaking to the motion of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) to muzzle this House and bring in closure, notice of which he gave yesterday just prior to Your Honour recognizing me to speak on Bill C-58, one or two points have again to be drawn to the attention of this House. Members of the House have a responsibility to present the views of their constituents. This might be regarded as insignificant by some. However, I am surprised at the number of people who have written to me, and I understand other members have had similar responses, to specifically express their viewpoint on Bill C-58. The viewpoint they have expressed overwhelmingly is that they do not favour government interference in the existence of *Reader's Digest* or *Time Canada*.

The government says that all this closure motion will do is to take Bill C-58 from second reading in the House of Commons to the committee stage for examination. I must point out that the only way we can get the government to react is to keep on hammering in the House on a specific issue. When a matter comes to committee, the majority that the government enjoys is used in the same way as it is used in the House of Commons: they do not necessarily look at amendments to improve legislation but view them as a mad means by which the opposition is trying to embarrass the government into substantially changing legislation.

The government reminds me of the story of the farmer and his mule. One day he loaned the mule to his neighbour. The neighbour could not get the mule to work. The owner said there was no problem. He picked up a fence post which was lying nearby, hit the mule over the head, and it immediately started to work. When the neighbour asked why he did that, the farmer replied, "First you have to get his attention". That is how we have to handle this government. It seems we must make speeches for days and days before we can get their attention. Thousands of letters from ordinary citizens must be sent to this government before it will respond, if it responds at all. The way it is

[Mr. Friesen.]

responding in this case is to muzzle parliament by bringing in closure.

We have questioned the government about the manner in which *Reader's Digest* and *Time* must become sufficiently Canadian in order to survive in this country. The government did not give us the details until just a short while ago when the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Cullen) tabled them in the House. We have had 3½ hours of debate. The real reason this legislation is now before us is that the President of the Privy Council and the government whip cannot guarantee how many government members will abstain because they would like to vote against Bill C-58. I know they have been receiving the same correspondence as members on this side. Therefore, the muzzle is not only on parliament as such; it has been placed on members of the government.

As my colleague pointed out, of those members on the government side who spoke, one-third spoke against the bill. What about the minister? He says it is 11 months since the bill was given first reading and, therefore, placed before the people of Canada. It almost seems that he believes if a bill is on the order paper long enough, even though it is not debated, it should be passed simply for that reason. That is the conclusion that can be drawn from that statement.

● (1700)

The real issue is that almost everything the Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner) has touched has gone bad. Consider the criticism we hear today about the CRTC and Canadian content and the meddling of the CRTC not only on Canadian content on television but on the cable question. The minister has touched on all those areas.

The same thing with the CBC. The minister, again, has made many Canadians take notice of what is happening in the CBC. But I am sure what has really happened is that the minister has come on hands and knees, grovelling to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and saying, "Let's bring back Bill C-58 because my personal reputation is at stake." That is why he had to get the use of closure, to show that he is tough, that he has clout within the cabinet when in fact he is just a lightweight. Maybe he is also one of the nobodies the Prime Minister described us as being some time ago. That is why he wants to have closure brought in. That is why he wants to show Canadians that the cabinet must now support him. Because it was my understanding about two weeks ago that it was very likely Bill C-58 would not be brought back to the House, that there was a lot of cabinet opposition to the bill and the cabinet would just as gladly like to see it die and not see the light of day any more.

However, that would have brought into question the reputation of the minister and it would have brought into question the guarantees he has given to various Canadian associations, not least of which are *Maclean's* magazine and the Canadian Periodical Publishers Association. So he had to come to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) and he had to go to the Prime Minister and literally beg for his political life. That is why closure is upon the House.

There are issues which are important, and this is one of them. When Canadians speak, I believe parliament should listen, and the government has not listened. They have