

*Government Orders*

Keep in mind, that it is a part of the grand strategy to tell members of Parliament, representatives of the respective political parties, that: Yes, you have a complete statute before you, a complete bill before you, with various amendments, and after it goes to committee, second reading, third reading, report stage, the whole works and it comes back and you want to have ample opportunity as say the Leader of the Opposition or party spokesperson, the government does not want to do that.

Even with all of these incursions into members' time, the government opposite is still not satisfied. It is not enough for them to reduce the number of supply days, it is not sufficient to cut off the budget debate, it will not do to sacrifice 25 per cent of the address debate, even the premature shortening of the speeches at second and third reading will not satisfy the government's appetite for beating up on members of Parliament. It needs something else. It needs a streamlined time allocation rule as well.

When time allocation rules were adopted by the House in 1969 it was written into their text a device to discourage governments from unilateral action. If the government could reach agreement with all of the parties, it could move a time allocation order without notice and see it decided without debate. If it had a majority of the parties but not all of them it could proceed without notice, but the order would be subject to a two-hour debate. In cases where it did not have the agreement of a majority of the parties, the government would have to give a day's notice before the two-hour debate.

These safety valves have not been onerous. Successive governments have not been inhibited from using the time allocation rules and members of the present government uses them almost as often as they change their own socks.

Nonetheless, the Conservatives are an impatient lot and they find it hard to live with the fact that the day on which a time allocation motion is debated cannot be counted as a day within the allotted time.

Now the government proposes to make all time allocation motions non-debatable and to make the day on which such an order is adopted count as a day within the allocation. This will save the government a whole two-hour debate. It will accelerate the passage of the bill

by one calendar day or perhaps two if time allocation is used both before and after committee. What it removes, however, is any inhibition of the government attempting to ram legislation, no matter how undesirable or unpopular, down the people's throats. It will also remove any inducement for the opposition to co-operate in any way with the government in moving its program forward. Making time allocation easier for this government is like giving an alcoholic the keys to a distillery.

The government will find, more and more, that it is compelled to use the rules rather than other forms of persuasion. On legislative items that might otherwise have been passed after a moderate amount of debate will not proceed unless the government uses the rules that it seeks to make more convenient. These rules, to which the government now too readily turns for relief, will have to be depended upon in the normal course of events. Without co-operation from the other parties, the overall progress of the legislation will be slowed by the constant invoking of the rules that were meant to be used only in exceptional cases.

Earlier, it was mentioned that at least some of the motivation for these proposals at this time was pettiness and peevishness. The government's motion contains a number of proposals for which there can be no other explanation. For example, there is a proposal that the loss of a quorum should mean only that the House adjourn for the day and that the item under consideration not disappear from the Order Paper, unless restored later. A government with a majority has a responsibility to keep the House open and it should be prepared to pay a price for not being able to live up to that responsibility.

A government with a majority should be able to keep 12 per cent of its members in the House to keep its business moving and, if it cannot, it should not be able to get off with so light a penalty as merely having the House adjourn for the rest of the day. Similarly, moving the axing hour of closure from 1 a.m. to 11 p.m. merely serves to make Parliament's most unseemly rule even less severe. A government desiring to use the guillotine of guillotines should be forced to keep the House open to a very late hour, not merely to give more time to the debate that is due to be cut off, but also to provide more disincentive to the use of this severe rule.