

Time Allocation

Opposition represent the people of Canada and their constituents. However, what happened on Monday morning? A whole day was set aside for further debate on Bill C-84, an important matter of income taxation. Where was the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez)? Where were his colleagues from the New Democratic Party and his side-kicks from the Liberals Party? They were not to be seen. There was not one Member from that side of the House who wished to rise in his or her place.

Furthermore, when the vote was called, where was the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt? He must have been asleep somewhere at 11.30 on Monday morning. It is clear in *Hansard*, in the record of those who voted, that only 40 out of a possible 70 Opposition members voted. The name of the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt is nowhere to be found in that list. That is what we are facing.

It is great oratory to be sure and makes a great impression on television. However, when the time comes for substance, that substance is lacking in the extreme.

Returning to the matter under discussion, the issue on which parliamentarians are being asked to vote is whether we want the question to be put. I believe that I have a rather easy task before me in persuading Members of the House of Commons to vote in the affirmative. I believe that when the vote is counted we will see that all those thinking Members of Parliament will have voted in the affirmative. I am even confident that we will see some Members opposite vote in the affirmative.

When one looks at the Members opposite, one can see that quite a few of them are perhaps too far gone to see any reason. I see the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) and the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy). We dealt with the Member for Nickel Belt previously. There is not much hope for them. The Hon. Member for Windsor West and the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry have been here too long associated with the Liberal Party. They have become contaminated.

However, there are one or two Members opposite with a vestige of intelligence left, I am sure. They will be voting with Members on this side of the House on this question. We know why there are so many Members opposite in the House in these last few minutes of this debate. We know why they came here. They do not want to sit here until four minutes after 1 p.m. in order that Parliament can do its work, get on with the business and do a good job for the people of Canada. The only reason there are so many of them here is to prevent us from doing that. However, in the process they must sit there and listen. The Hon. Member for Windsor West is not listening, but those who do will learn something.

They will regret having done this dirty work of sitting there and preventing the vote from taking place at four minutes past 1 p.m. When the vote is called, they will realize their mistake.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The venerable Member with all his years in the House should no doubt be aware of the fact that it is against the rules to

comment on the presence or absence of other Members in the House. I hope he will return to the relevant issue, which is the question of the Government's attempt to cut off debate with its massive majority.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I appreciate what the Hon. Member is saying and I agree with her. We will carry on with debate.

Mr. Nickerson: Of course, the Hon. Member is quite right. It is not necessary to comment on her presence or absence because people can usually hear whether or not she is present.

The eminent Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Lewis) gave a very lucid explanation earlier today of the debate that has taken place so far. He explained in great detail the opportunities that were afforded to parliamentarians from all sides, particularly in the Opposition. In fact, Members on this side went out of their way and actually sat down and kept quiet from time to time simply to allow members opposite an opportunity to speak. We have a great respect for the institution of Parliament and we went out of our way to give them ample time to express their views.

We have heard members of the general public speak on this issue. There have been commissions travelling around the country. It has been a matter of continuing debate, practically year after year. Everyone has had an opportunity to make his views known and has been successful in doing so. The Bill was initially formulated after wide consultation. It had the tacit agreement of almost everyone in Canada even before it was introduced. When it was introduced, arguments were made, and it was shown that technical improvements could be made here and there. Then what did the Government do? It brought in amendments to reflect those concerns. The Government has been listening to people. We have been doing precisely what we have been accused of not doing by the Opposition.

● (1240)

The Bill does for representation in the House of Commons exactly what Canadians want. The objective is to keep the number of Members within reason. Surely that is what most Canadians want. They did not want the House to grow, over a period of years, into a House of 500 or 600 Members. They wanted a reasonable lid kept on that. That is precisely what has happened. They wanted, in general, representation by population with each Member representing more or less the same number of constituents. They wanted exceptions made in special circumstances, for example, Prince Edward Island and its historic right to four Members. They wanted special considerations for the very large northern ridings. That is precisely what is contained in the Bill. We can never get it absolutely perfect. We cannot expect everybody to agree on it. However, the Bill is surely the best fit and should be voted on as soon as possible, so that people will be able to get their affairs in order and start arranging for the next election. These things come upon us from time to time. There will be no necessity for one for the next 3.5 years, but at least we will know where we stand.