

Proposal for Time Allocation

sufficient for members to be able to reach a decision. This issue being one of judgment I believe we should make up our minds at a quarter to ten this evening.

Mr. Churchill: Would the hon. member permit a question? Coming as he does from Winnipeg, he is very fair. When he mentions the discussion of this issue on interim supply is he not overlooking the fact that it was not until expert evidence was produced before the committee on defence that we really got to the root of the matter? The discussion earlier was a confused discussion because the minister could not give us accurate information.

An hon. Member: Why have it, then?

Mr. Churchill: It was the fault of the minister. He was confused.

Mr. Knowles: I will be fair to my hon. friend from Winnipeg. I am quite willing to remove from our consideration the number of days spent on defence when we were on interim supply. I submit that the time left, the time spent on second reading, in the committee on national defence and in committee of the whole, is sufficient to enable us to exercise our powers of judgment on this bill.

But I think the other issue which is before us, the long range issue, is even more important. This matter has been referred to a number of times today, but like others I feel very strongly about it. I refer to the necessity which faces this parliament of finding a way, in a year which contains only 12 months, to deal with the amount of business which must come before us on behalf of the people of Canada. We often say that there is a great deal more to be done nowadays, and sometimes when we say this people think we are only generalizing. I would therefore like to give one or two facts in support of my contention that this is a very real problem.

If one takes the trouble, as I have done, to check the sessions of parliament going right back to 1867, he will find that before the turn of the century no session of parliament ever lasted more than four months—most of them lasted from two and a half to three months. If one looks through the records of the early part of this century he will find that but for the session of 1912-13 which extended over six and a half months—

Mr. Churchill: In 1903.

Mr. Knowles: No, but for the session of 1912-13 there was none of any great length.

The 1912-13 session was the longest in the early part of this century. Most of them lasted for four or four and a half months. Even during the first world war the limit was about four and a half months. To come closer to modern times, some of us were here for the sessions during the second world war and we thought they were long. The fact of the matter is that although the sitting extended technically over the full calendar year, so that parliament could be recalled immediately in case of need, the total sitting time never exceeded six and a half months. I heard an interjection. Yes, some of us were here during the sessions I have just mentioned.

Since that time the length of sessions has increased. Until four or five years, the average was of the order of eight or nine months. Now for the second time in this decade we are in a session which has gone more than 14 months. Surely it is clear that the amount of business has so greatly exploded that we have to find some way to cope with the fact that there are still only 12 months in a calendar year.

• (9:30 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, I would like to think I might be the last person in the house to judge what we do by dollars, and yet I think even dollars can sometimes be an interesting measurement. I find that in the first years of Canada's parliament the amount of money that had to be appropriated, all told, was of the order of \$20 million to \$25 million. By 1900 that had doubled to \$50 million. By 1939 it was still only \$500 million, but today it is \$11 billion. Let me put those figures in a slightly different way so that they can be compared with each other: in 1867 \$20 million; in 1967 \$11,000 million, an increase of 550 times.

Dollars do not tell everything and a lot of that, of course, is inflation, but surely the length of time we have had to spend dealing with the nation's business and the amount of dollars we have had to collect and appropriate suggest that our business has exploded to such an extent that we have got to take this problem seriously.

An hon. Member: A welfare state.

Mr. Knowles: My hon. friend says the problem of the welfare state comes in. He simply reminds me to point out, if I have time, that in addition to these evidences of what has happened, the fact of the matter is that parliament, which used to be concerned with roads, post offices and a few other things, is now concerned with everything under and