of a democratic assembly. Our rules were certainly never designed to permit the total frustration of one side or the other, the total stagnation of debate, or the total paralysis of the system.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-22 was first introduced on November 6, 1986 and given first reading on November 7, following a division in both cases. The strong opposition to the Bill led to the use of procedural tactics for purposes of delay to which the Government responded with procedural tactics of their own. Seven divisions took place prior to the introduction of the Bill, most of them resulting from the moving of dilatory motions during Routine Proceedings. Fourteen more divisions, most of them again resulting from the moving of dilatory motions during Routine Proceedings, took place before the Bill obtained a second reading on December 8, 1986.

The Bill was referred to a Legislative Committee which reported it back to the House with amendments on March 16, 1987, after 24 meetings and 82 hours of debate as the Deputy Prime Minister pointed out. Numerous amendments were proposed at the report stage to which four days have so far been devoted.

On April 7, the Hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. André) gave notice of an allocation of time motion in terms of S. O. 117. This Standing Order was adopted by the House in 1968 and has been regularly used ever since. It is a legitimate procedure provided it is not abused and it has been employed by governments both Liberal and Progressive Conservative without any procedural challenge to their right to do so.

[*English*]

As the House knows, dilatory tactics prevented the House from reaching motions on two successive days last week. On the third day, Friday, the Government undertook not to proceed with its allocation of time motion respecting Bill C-22 and by mutual agreement Routine Proceedings did not take place. The tactical battle has unfortunately become a substitute for debate. Opponents of the Bill have used various devices to delay the passage of this Bill at its successive stages. The Government has countered by using superseding motions having the opposite effect. To the viewing public, these tactics must be totally meaningless. Our procedures are being used for purposes for which they were never originally intended, and the public could be pardoned for believing that our rules have no logical basis at all.

In the kind of situation which faces us, I have no doubt that negotiation provides the only route to a satisfactory solution. However, when negotiations fail there comes a time when the Chair is obliged to consider what its own responsibilities are. One of the functions of the Speaker is to ensure that the House is able to transact its business. This does not mean that the Chair plays any part in assisting the Government in the management of its business agenda. I want to repeat that; this does not mean that the Chair plays any part in assisting the Government in the management of its business agenda.

Considerable debate has already taken place on this Bill. It cannot be argued that the opportunities for airing objections to it have been unreasonably restricted. There has been considerable disruption of Routine Proceedings which, as I have said, has given me very grave concern.

I might point out that I invited Hon. Members last Wednesday, if they chose at that time, to give any advice they might have for the Speaker.

Routine Proceedings are an essential part of House business and if they are not protected the interests of the House and the public it serves are likely to suffer severely.

The moving of dilatory motions during Routine Proceedings is a very recent practice which originated in the early 1980s. I share the doubts expressed by some Hon. Members yesterday as to its procedural validity. It is a practice which can supersede the presentation of petitions, delay indefinitely the introduction of Bills—those of Private Members as well as those of the Government—and completely block debate on motions for concurrence in committee reports as well as on allocation of time motions. These arguments were made very effectively by Hon. Members in the course of their contributions yesterday. The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) argued very strongly that during Routine Proceedings a member should be recognized only for the purpose contemplated by the particular rubric under which he or she rises. Since Routine Proceedings have been moved to the morning on three days of the week, these problems have been aggravated. However, this is a broader issue which will need to be addressed at another time.

The immediate question which faces the Chair is whether the motion moved yesterday by the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council is acceptable or not. I recognize that if we are to adhere rigidly to recent precedents, including my own ruling of November 24, 1986, the motion would have to be ruled unacceptable. The House is nevertheless facing an impasse which it has been unable to resolve for itself. There comes a time when the Chair has to face its responsibilities. When circumstances change and the Rules of Procedure provide no solution, the Chair must fall back on its discretion in the interests of the House and all its members. This may require the Chair to modify or vary an earlier decision.

In using my discretion, I believe I am supported by the centuries old tradition which attaches to the Office of Speaker. It was Speaker Lenthall who, in the reign of Charles I, declared in the presence of the King that the Speaker's first duty lay to the House of Commons. It was Speaker Brand who in 1881 ended the paralysis of the British House by imposing closure of his own initiative.