

Business of the House

debates. Therefore if hon. members wish to follow the spirit of parliament I suggest that we follow the Mother of Parliaments and restrict second reading debates to one or two days.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allmand: The government introduces motions like this the better to order the progress of business in this House and to see that its program of legislation will be passed in a reasonable period of time. The government also introduces motions like this as a response to the opposition attempt to run parliament according to their schedule. As I said earlier, as long as they attempt to foreclose the program of legislation put forward by the government with attempts at closure by delay, repetition, and obstruction, we will respond with motions such as this.

If this motion passes there will be four more days in this second reading debate. There will then be a long period in committee where the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford), myself, and our officials will go to explain the legislation. Other people in the country can come before the committee and put forward their views. There will also be a long debate at the report stage, and a long debate at third reading.

I will start taking the opposition seriously, when they talk about closure and time allocation, when they show me by their actions that they are willing to take a responsible approach to the business of this House.

● (2030)

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I might say, as a member who, since 1972, has been sympathetic to gun control and who has introduced two private members' bills in the House on the subject, that I am disappointed, disillusioned, and literally amazed at the stupidity of the government.

There can be no question about the importance of the legislation. It affects four million people in Canada and a stimulating debate has developed up to this point between those interested in the shooting sports and those interested in increasing public safety. The government's refusal to allow this debate to proceed uninterrupted is a knee-jerk reaction of an administration which does not understand the sensitivity inherent in legislation of this type. To impose closure thus soon is running the risk of losing sympathy for the legislation in terms of the public debate which is going on in the country at large. As one who has long supported the principle of gun control this action brings no credit on those who have advocated such a position.

The Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) talks about the "closure of delay" and the "closure of obstruction". He has demonstrated clearly the closure of his own mind on the subject. It is absurd to try to pass peace and security legislation in the absence of a consensus, without support in the country, and the government is throwing this support away.

The hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) has told us he would like to see the gun control provisions severed from this package. I had reservations about that proposition because this is not just a gun control bill, it is a

[Mr. Allmand.]

wiretapping bill, a dangerous offenders bill, a crime inquiry bill, and a parole bill. We had serious reservations with regard to the Conservative position on that aspect. At this point, however, we feel we ought to rethink that attitude in the light of the decision the government has taken.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) has told us he would like to get the bill into committee so that witnesses might be called. I have been waiting for a commitment from him and his supporters that closure will not be imposed in the committee as well. I should like a commitment that a long and full debate will be possible with regard to this subject in committee and that we shall not find the Liberal members on that committee dictating to us how many witnesses will be called and how much time we can spend listening to their views.

The motion we are considering today is an indication of the fact the government has lost touch with the constituencies. I can understand the frustration of the hon. member for Nipissing (Mr. Blais) when he said that members of the opposition were always on their feet talking while Liberal backbenchers do not have that chance. One justification for closure is the opportunity it provides for Liberal backbenchers to contribute. I can understand their frustration, having to sit there in silence or, worse, pound their benches after some of the nonsense we hear from over there. They want to get up once in a while and show they are alive.

The mail every member has received on both sides of the peace and security issue is overwhelming. There has been so much response that I cannot conceive any sensitive government cutting off debate.

Mr. Allmand: When are you going to move to adjourn the House?

Mr. Leggatt: It is another indication that these people are no longer merely arrogant; they are drunk with power. They are replacing arrogance with a stupidity they used not to show. The government will need all the friends it can get if it wishes to pass the kind of controversial legislation we are considering. It has made a silly, stupid, and arrogant decision to abandon those friends. It will rue the day when it decided there is no longer a place for meaningful debate in the House. To impose closure after such a limited time is a shame. In this party we have had four speakers out of 16. The Minister of Justice said the other day that this was just a debate on the principle. Mr. Speaker, the principle here is whether three million people in Canada will have to register themselves. Could there be a more important principle than that? That is the principle of the gun control provisions, and that is why it is so vital.

An hon. Member: Why don't you get up and move the adjournment of the House again?

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélanger): Order, please. I think hon. members have enough experience to know that when an hon. member has the floor he must be allowed to speak and be listened to carefully.

[English]

Mr. Leggatt: We oppose this motion because all members should have an unfettered opportunity to make an input on