

*Supply*

Government was Joe Clark. The delay in 1979 was longer than any since Diefenbaker in 1962.

• (1130)

*[Translation]*

Mr. Speaker, when I heard about the motion moved by the Progressive Conservative Party's official spokesman for the Business of the House, I must admit I was very surprised to find it contained allegations that we not only disregarded the Constitution—which is not the case, as I indicated earlier—but also that we disregarded the practices of Parliament. Coming from a Party that literally laid siege to Parliament for sixteen days by preventing it from operating, this is surprising, to say the least, and I think it does not say much for that Party's credibility.

I would like to use the few moments I am allowed to mention and briefly explain the reasons why this particular session, as many others in the past, as I indicated earlier, has been going on for such a long time for three years, in fact. I think there are three main reasons for this situation. First of all, we must remember that this session followed a period during which we were faced with two elections in less than one year, and during that time, a backlog of legislation had accumulated. To deal with this backlog, it was necessary to use the first several months of this 32nd Parliament to pass the legislation. You will remember that as a result of the two elections in less than a year, a host of procedural problems had to be resolved by the present Government. The House will also remember that the estimates for two fiscal years, almost three, had not been adopted, that the rules regarding the business of supply were no longer being applied, that time allocation provided by the Standing Orders was no longer effective, and that as a result, as Leader of the Government, I had to negotiate with representatives of the Opposition in order to reach a substantial and major agreement by which we could approve the estimates for two fiscal years, straighten out the business of supply and dispose of our legislative backlog. All this has taken a great deal of time, and that is one of the reasons why this session has been unusually long.

A second reason is the nature of the Throne Speech of April 1980. This Throne Speech was so substantial, in that it contained such major reforms in various areas, that it is now quite understandable why it took so long to deal with certain parts of the Throne Speech, and why this has been such a long session. My colleagues will recall the debate on constitutional reform, patriation of the Constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the new amending formula that will enable us to amend our own Constitution without asking another country's permission, and the fourth element of our constitutional reform, which enshrines the principle of sharing and equalization, of sharing wealth among the richest and the most deprived regions of our country. Constitutional reform has therefore made demands on the time of the House. It was an

unusual proposal that no other Party had ever had the courage to make.

Following the constitutional reform, another major reform, also announced in the same Throne Speech and which concerned the energy problem, was on the agenda. We introduced a National Energy Policy, which also made demands on the time of the House, as Hon. Members will recall, although the Progressive Conservative Party showed a blatant lack of concern on this occasion, when instead of having a sensible debate on this Bill, they prevented Parliament from sitting by letting the bells ring for sixteen days, a childish and irresponsible act. Nevertheless, it was a major reform in the energy field and was also part of the list announced in April 1980.

Another major reform and other measures that were necessary in the circumstances were adopted with respect to the economy. Up to now, we have had three budgets, and all the measures arising from those budgets have of course put demands on the time of the House of Commons, and in view of the urgency of the situation and the specific characteristics of the recession we have been experiencing during the last few months, we are preparing to bring down a fourth budget tomorrow evening. My learned colleague is therefore unrealistic in moving that Parliament be prorogued in order to have a Throne Speech in which the Government would state its major priorities and to have eight days of debate on the Throne Speech, before allowing the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) to bring down his budget and propose measures to deal with the economic situation, which, in my opinion, requires urgent action.

Thus, Mr. Speaker, during the last three years we have seen major reforms which were announced, with considerable courage, in the same Throne Speech, I am proud to say, which for once in the history of Canada, proposed a host of unprecedented measures which quite naturally met with opposition and placed considerable demands on the time of the House of Commons.

Throughout these major achievements which made history and of which we should all be extremely proud, we managed to have 162 Bills passed by this Parliament. This is above average, considering that in sessions lasting one year, Parliament normally produces about 48 or 50 legislative measures. So in three years, as I just pointed out, 162 Bills were passed, which is above average. When we complain that Parliament is not producing enough, the Opposition retorts: but having said that Parliament has produced more than usual how can you say that Parliament is not producing enough? My answer to that is that Parliament must evolve, and that in a modern society, the demands being made on Parliament are increasing, and that if Parliament is to respond to those demands, it must be flexible enough to adopt the measures that are necessary to cope with the demands on our times. What was an acceptable average ten years ago is no longer acceptable today, so that although compared to previous sessions, we are above average, much