

I cannot accept on the one hand the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) standing in this House making the speech he made just a few short days ago and today the man who sits at his right hand, the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski), walks into the House and moves closure. The Prime Minister said he would do all within his power to oppose capital punishment and two days later in walks the Deputy Prime Minister and moves closure.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin) is raising a point which was raised a few days ago. I suggest to the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) that the Chair would find it appropriate to make a ruling and I will do so at eleven o'clock Monday morning. I do not see anything to be gained by re-arguing what I heard a few days ago. I assure all Hon. Members that I have the point and that having been through this same debate twice in my time in this Chamber, along with many of those who are here today, I understand completely the feelings, sentiment, emotion, and some of the other things that go with it. With that we can close off the argument and I will come back to the Chamber at eleven o'clock Monday morning.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the Parties and I think you might find there is a disposition to not see the clock in order that the House may deal with report stage of Bill C-56 and third reading on consent, which deals with certain Acts relating to financial institutions. In addition, we would deal with second and third reading of Bill C-66, an Act to establish the Veterans Appeal Board. Having dealt with those two items, we would adjourn for the weekend.

• (1500)

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I want to confirm that there have been discussions. There was an undertaking by the House Leaders to assist the Government in passing certain Bills, particularly that of concern to veterans and the tandem legislation to the Bill with which we have just dealt.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party, it is our intention not to see the clock for a few minutes in order to allow the completion of this legislation today.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, after the conduct of the Government in moving closure, it does not deserve any consideration with respect to its legislative package.

Mr. Nickerson: Don't take it personally.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): If that is the way it is, good-bye.

Mr. Speaker: It may be that the Chair could ignore the clock for a couple of seconds in case anyone wants to change their mind. I am, of course, prepared to co-operate. Are there any Members rising?

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I want to echo the sentiments of my hon. friend, the Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray), the House Leader for the Liberal Party, that it is very frustrating,

Veterans Appeal Board

when you are trying to accommodate business of the House, to have members of the Government yelling across the floor at you. That is very difficult.

However, I would like to propose that we take five minutes to deal with the Bill of interest to veterans. The Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Hees) is here. He has been waiting patiently all day. We had an understanding that this Bill would be dealt with earlier. I think the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader (Mr. Lewis) made an error in the order of the business for today. In order to facilitate the Minister of Veterans Affairs, I suggest that we take two or three minutes to deal with this Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Is there consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

VETERANS APPEAL BOARD ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

Hon. George Hees (Minister of Veterans Affairs) moved that Bill C-66, an Act to establish the Veterans Appeal Board and to amend other Acts in relation thereto, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before speaking on Bill C-66 I would very much like to thank my hon. friends, the Member for Hull—Aylmer (Mr. Isabelle) and the Member for Beaches (Mr. Young), for their gracious assistance in seeing this legislation passed through all stages today. I appreciate very much the attitude of all Members of this House and their kindness in allowing this important Bill to come before the House. I also wish to thank the Government and Opposition House Leaders who so kindly and generously agreed to see this legislation brought forward before the summer recess.

Hon. Members will be aware of the substantial progress that has been made in reducing delays in the disability pension process. In the last two and one-half years the time required to process pension applications has been cut by well over half. At the same time, a far greater percentage of decisions are going in favour of the veteran today than was the case previously.

These very satisfactory results have been achieved in the face of an almost 100 per cent increase in case load. It is quite a remarkable feat for any operation to double its work-load while slashing its turnaround time by over half. Bill C-66 will help us to continue to achieve these kinds of results for veterans and their dependants.

We are proposing that the Pension Review Board and the War Veterans Allowance Board, two independent quasi-judicial boards, be merged into a single Veterans Appeal Board. In this way we will be able to make maximum use of