

Government Orders

Here we are debating this bill today, three days of debate on second reading, jammed into committee, three sitting days in the committee with closure threatened on the Thursday night so we walked out.

The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader moved a closure motion in committee, for heaven's sake. We walked out but got the committee going again Wednesday because of co-operation on our part and a willingness to get on with the job and do it properly.

It was all done on Tuesday which was faster than the government expected anyway because we were so co-operative. We allowed votes. We carried on. We lost a lot of votes but we carried on and we got the job done.

Now we are back here and we are going to have two days of debate on report stage with 65 amendments and one day of debate at third reading. This on a bill to save the country.

You would think the government would allow this House to have a reasonable debate on this issue. Instead it clamps down at every turn. The Bloc in its hypocritical way is nodding "yes, yes" and its members are the ones who caused this particular move on the part of the government.

I can sympathize at least with the bully-boy tactics of the government when I look at what went on in this House yesterday. I can sympathize. I do not agree. I think it is wicked and I think the government should be ashamed of itself for putting itself in this place, but had it brought this bill in before, had it brought it in in a timely way, it would not be in this jam today.

It is its own fault. It was promised in the throne speech a year ago, April as I recall was the date of that throne speech. Here it is a year later and the government is finally bringing the thing in and in its usual bully-boy way is saying, "Pass the bill now, or else".

That is what the country is faced with. That is this government's notion of saving Canada. That is its notion of preserving national unity and doing all it can to save the country.

For the government House leader to try to bully us the way he has the last two weeks is an example the most shocking abuse.

• (1700)

He is trying to blame the Liberals, who have co-operated throughout on this bill, with everything that has gone wrong. They are trying to blame the Liberal Party of Canada for failing to co-operate when this party has, in fact, co-operated significantly on this bill. We have suggested sensible amendments and we have other sensible amendments that are being rejected. We will accept that and we are willing to have a fairly limited debate and have a vote. We indicated our willingness to do all that.

However, the government House leader is trying to suggest that it is our fault that the country is in this mess when we urged the government six, eight, ten months ago to bring this bill in and get on with it.

I cannot understand the approach of the government House leader. Unfortunately, he has been a real bully-boy throughout this exercise. It is shocking.

Mr. Gauthier: It is a disgrace.

Mr. Milliken: It is a disgrace. The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier is right. The government House leader should be ashamed of himself.

Another thing I would mention is his inattentiveness to this debate. He has not sat in on this debate in this House for five minutes since his own speech on the opening of the debate. He got up and left right after that speech. He did not even have the courtesy to stay and listen to the leading speeches from members of the opposition at that time. That is contempt of Parliament. The government House leader has an obligation, especially as an officer of the House, to remain in the Chamber and listen to the debate, particularly on his own bill. This was his bill. He had a duty to be here.

An hon. member: Order.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member says order. He should go and speak to the government House leader and say, "Do your job and get into the House". That is where he should be.

An hon. member: Right on.

Mr. Milliken: He should be in this House defending this terrible legislation and allowing votes and debate on every amendment that has been proposed by the members of this House, 65 amendments and only a handful will be debated.