

Government Orders

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, if you are intending to hear further argument, considering my role of responding to arguments, I would rather hear all the arguments and come at the end.

Mr. Speaker: I accept the hon. parliamentary secretary's suggestion.

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the recognition and I will try to be brief.

I was not in the Chamber when the motion was formally put. Through the benefit of the modern technology of television, I had the set turned down low and heard a little and frankly could not believe my ears as to what was being proposed by my friend opposite, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader.

I am not going to repeat the arguments that have been made by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, the hon. member for Kamloops, let alone the hon. member who just spoke.

This to me, in the years that I have been here, would boggle the mind in terms of the effective working of Parliament. What really disturbs me, having spent a good many years on the opposition side, is that we know, and my former friends across the way know from when they were on the opposition side, that the prorogation date is sometimes used as the negotiating lever to get bills to move along. Under the tradition and history of the British parliamentary system, come prorogation, everything on the Order Paper died.

It was then incumbent on the government and the responsibility of the government in the new session to reintroduce the bills and/or try to work matters out by consent, as it often did.

Mr. Speaker, you have a good memory also. There were many times in this Chamber in which a deal was made before prorogation. Sometimes, by unanimous consent, bills which were on the Order Paper, certain ones being difficult to agree on perhaps, were nevertheless put together as a package even though prorogation was going to come that hour. In effect, these bills would

stay by formal motion in the House in the same position on the Order Paper as they were before prorogation.

To me, without repeating everything that has been said, and I understand what my hon. friend from Ottawa—Vanier mentioned about reform, I am all for the reform of this place. I am all for expediting the business of this place. I think we waste a lot of time in this place. There is a way to do it.

If this government is going to bring in an omnibus motion, in effect just lumping all the bills together that were at some stage in a previous session of Parliament, and then through a formal motion of the House where they know they have the numbers to have that the *fait accompli* for the passage of all the different items in the motion, then this will bode very poorly to say the least for debate in this Chamber in the future.

Why would a government really worry about the opposition's concern about various bills if it knows that come prorogation date the debate will be cut off and Parliament will be prorogued since it has a majority. In the new Parliament the government knows it will not lose anything anyway.

The government can bring in an omnibus package resolution which has never been done before, as far as I know. I have not had time to go through the authorities, I have not seen an authority to justify this yet. This might be the way for government to really move a lot of business along, to go through this prorogation charade. In a new session, it can put all these bills down on the Order Paper and have one vote because of a Notice of Motion.

I think this is a very serious matter. I know the Chair will give it the consideration it deserves because I can see real problems in the future. What disappoints me is that those who used to sit in the opposition know the few levers the opposition has to focus attention in a proper way on government bills.

I would humbly suggest that this type of precedent, if approved, will remove the lever that is the whole reason for this place.

The former hon. member for Prince Albert, John Diefenbaker would say: "This is a place to talk". We all know we talk too much from time to time and there is too much repetition. There is too much reading of speeches. I wish that would be corrected.