

Proposal for Time Allocation

Mr. Churchill: Would the minister answer a question at this point?

Mr. McIlraith: Well, Mr. Speaker I should like to put at least part of my remarks before the house without interruption. At the conclusion of my remarks I will be happy to answer any questions the hon. member may have; indeed, sometimes I enjoy his questions. In any event the truth of the matter is that under the Canadian parliamentary system, based as it is on the British system, the government is given the responsibility of governing. That implies the right to have a decision taken by parliament, or in this instance by the House of Commons, on the proposals laid by it before the house. That right, of course, in controlled by the full right of discussion by the elected representatives of the people sent here to consider these proposals and to take decisions on them. Any other arrangement would be intolerable, for the separation of authority and responsibility is the first definition of tyranny. I respectfully suggest that an overextension of either right would lead to the development of anarchy. To find the correct balance between debate and decision must ever be the task of responsible conduct in the House of Commons.

We in this parliament have chosen the procedure under temporary standing order 15A, but we must, in choosing that responsibility, exercise it in a way that will be consistent with our concept of parliament and not permit an abuse to arise that is the first step toward tyranny.

Holding those views, believing that the stage has now come when this house must pass on the proposal for the allocation of time which we have submitted, I have made my motion providing for two further days of discussion in the committee of the whole house on the individual clauses of the bill and one day for the third reading stage of the bill. With those words, Mr. Speaker, I respectfully submit my motion for the consideration of this house and ask the house to pass on it in accordance with the views of individual members.

Mr. Churchill: May I now ask my question, Mr. Speaker. I would now ask the government house leader whether, in discussing the length of time spent on clause 2, he will disclose, first, there was the suggestion that clause 2 is the most important clause of the bill; second, on behalf of this party I proposed to him on Monday that we were prepared to pass all clauses of the bill except clauses 2

[Mr. McIlraith.]

and 6 which we asked to have deferred until the fall. Nevertheless, the rest of the bill would have been passed on Monday—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Churchill:—without further debate. In addition we were prepared to pass the bill on adult training, the report of the rules committee and interim supply by Friday of this week. That offer was rejected by the government.

Mr. McIlraith: I shall be very happy to answer that rather lengthy question as fully as I can. In assessing the important clauses of the bill, undoubtedly clause 2 is very important, going to the root of the bill. Whether it is the most important of the 65 clauses I cannot say, but certainly it is a very important clause going to the very root of the bill.

I do not want to go into details of what was said by each person in the business committee because I have always taken the position that the confidentiality of house leaders' meetings or business committee meetings should not be broken, but I would be happy to confirm that a proposal was made by the hon. member, not that we pass the bill as he suggested in his question, but that we let clauses 2 and 6 stand and that we then call the other clauses of the bill and carry them in the committee of the whole stage, and that the whole bill then stand, with the result that there would be no legislative effect, no legislative result to what was done.

• (3:00 p.m.)

The whole bill would then stand over for four or five months—I think that was the term he used—or, anyway, until the fall of this year, without having been passed. In addition, if the proposal not to proceed further with the bill at this stage of the session was acceptable, they would agree to winding up the other business for this session of parliament, that is the manpower training bill, interim supply and the report of the rules committee. They would do this within three or four days, or in any event within a very short period of time.

That proposal was rejected after careful consideration—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. McIlraith: It did get careful consideration, and it was rejected for the following reasons. First, the bill would have been stopped completely. I should add that as part of the proposal the hon. member had agreed