

Government Orders

or it goes back to start again. That is the way the system works.

That was a convention of this House for 124 years. It was a convention, and is still a convention in the House of Commons in England, the Mother of Parliaments, for all its hundreds of years. Some may ridicule the member from Kamloops as the parliamentary secretary did in his rebuttal yesterday claiming that his argument was extreme. It is not extreme.

Once the government has this precedent on the books, why should it worry too much about what the opposition says at any time about any bill? It can say: "Let them debate until the cows come home. Then we will have a prorogation some time, and then we will bring in an omnibus and ominous motion to put all the bills that we, the government like, put them all in one hat and throw them into the House of Commons. With a majority government we do not have to worry about debating each individual bill. We can put them back on the Order Paper at whatever stage they are at".

That, to me, is a convention that breaches fundamental rules of this institution. I am sad that the Speaker has made that ruling that forces us to debate this issue tonight.

There are so many things that can be said. That type of ruling ignores the practical working of this House, just by what has happened tonight and for the government Whip to say what he said. I cannot draw attention to the interest of members. This is not a sexy issue in terms of the public but as far as I am concerned, this is one of the more fundamental rulings the Chair is ever going to make and I am sad. I have sat here and missed three opportunities to participate in a small way, knowing that the ruling has already been made and knowing full well that the government majority is going to have its day because you have turned the clock back and you really make this place a charade by this type of ruling.

• (1850)

I know it is useless to talk now. The government's motion will pass. I just hope the opposition decides to oppose and I hope the debate continues until the appointed hour when we vote. I hope that having been sand-bagged on the rules changes and on this notice of

motion, somewhere in the collective opposition there is going to be a willingness to say to the government: "Hey, we know you have the numbers, but we are not going to give this by consent".

We all know, if you have been around here long enough, that three-quarters of the things done here are done by consent. I just cannot believe that having been sand-bagged on the rules changes, on this motion and some other matters that there is still going to be that receptive nature to do things by consent. The opposition has been whip-sawed enough and it should tell the government to change its ways because nothing is going to be done here by consent with this type of motion.

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have a chance to speak on this motion, although, like the previous speaker, I am sorry that it is necessary to do it. I cannot match the eloquence of either the member for Annapolis Valley—Hants or the member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte but I agree with the point they are making, that this motion of the government is a step toward destroying the power of Parliament as a place of real debate by people elected by the people of Canada.

It is only one step in a long process but what is happening, to put it briefly, is that the government has invented a totally new rule yesterday and today in Parliament. It never discussed the rule with the opposition, which was the usual way, until the last few years, of changing the rules. It just announced that it is going to do it differently. It had prorogued the last session, that is to say it ended it, and according to all the experience of centuries in this and other Parliaments, that means the legislation died. It could be brought in again and started afresh with fresh debate, and previous governments have used that system to good effect.

Now the government is just saying it is not going to bother with that, it is going to run five bills through, which have no connection with each other; five bills it wants through, in one motion, limiting the debate to one day by closure. In other words, each person gets a chance to speak for at most 20 minutes and he has to talk about five different bills which have nothing to do with each other. After people have spoken until eleven o'clock this night, it is over.