

Time Allocation

there has been sufficient and adequate time to debate this Bill in general principle so that it can come to a vote on second reading and go into a committee. That is what this debate is all about.

There have been a lot of red herrings brought into the heated argument that we have had so far that are not particularly helpful. Nobody likes to say to anybody: "You are going to have less as opposed to more". The act is that if you are going to have a restraint program that means anything, it has to be across the board.

Although I disagree with the position of the NDP, they are a little more honest than the Tories. They never worry about where the money will come from. The Tories like to have it both ways. They say they are all for restraint, all for slashing spending, in principle they will go along with the six and five program. However, when it comes to applying it to any identifiable group of individuals, they like to score little political points by defending them like Horatio at the bridge. I do not think that is honest; it is sitting on both sides of the fence. I do not see the Hon. Member for York-Peel (Mr. Stevens) here today. I would be interested in hearing his comments.

In any event, the pertinent issue today in this debate is whether a reasonable amount of time has been spent on this stage of the Bill. Any fair-minded individual would have to conclude it has. We should allow it to come to a vote and go to committee for further examination. Those who are opposed will have ample opportunity to make their views known at that stage. When it comes back to the House, they will have an opportunity to vote against it then as they do now. At least the elected representatives of this country should be allowed to vote on this issue and proceed to the next stage.

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, those Liberals are at it again. I do not know why they do it. There is no reason. It must be that they enjoy the use of closure.

On his own admission just five minutes ago, the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Smith) admitted that this issue had been debated for less than three days; less than three days on second reading of a Bill that will affect in perpetuity every Canadian as they approach the age of 65. That cannot be considered too long a debate. The debate has only just started.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) rose in her place this afternoon and pointed out that Bill C-131 is very important. She said we have to get through it, that they could not allow any more debate, that debate had to be closed off after three days. When asked when another day would be designated for the vote on second reading, she shrugged her shoulders. She did not know when the vote would take place. The order of business for next week is Bill C-133, an issue you have something to do with, Mr. Speaker. On one hand the Government says today this is an important item that has to be dealt with quickly. In the same breath, it says it does not know when it will come back and be voted on. There is no need for closure in this instance.

Mr. Smith: "Time allocation".

Mr. Nickerson: The Parliamentary Secretary should have listened to what the House Leader of the Official Opposition said yesterday. He made the proposal that if it was part of the package, we would deal expeditiously with Bill C-131 and allow it to come to a vote on second reading, in the same way as we would like to see the vote in this House on Bill C-133 to find out how the five originally honest Liberal backbenchers vote. I do not know how many of them are left now. I remember seeing in print that at least one of the supposedly honest Liberals could not vote for Bill C-133 in its present form. I want to be here when the vote is taken to see which way that Member votes.

If the Government had listened to what the House Leader of the Official Opposition said yesterday, it would have seen the opportunity to work together with those on this side. We wanted a package deal with the series of Bills dealing with the six and five program, we do not like what the Government is proposing and we want to have an opportunity to make improvements. We know the program will get through for no other reason than they hold the majority in this House. However, we had hoped to make some improvements to those Bills, perhaps improvements which you, Mr. Speaker, would find worthwhile.

Maybe we would have improved Bill C-133 so that it did not come back to the House in its present form and those who say they cannot support it in its present state could support it after amendments brought forward by the Conservative Party. That is not to be the case.

For some reason, the Government is scared of the NDP. I cannot understand why. I certainly would not be scared of them. I do not think they are any great danger to anybody. In fact, it is a Party that is self-destructing. I do not think they could take on anybody.

Today the House Leader for the NDP said this is the most fundamentally wrong social service legislation that has been proposed in 16 years, but how many Members do they have here? They have four Members here to deal with the most important piece of legislation in 16 years. They could not have kept this debate going and the Parliamentary Secretary knows that. That Party is so badly divided it is not funny. It is a Party that is falling apart.

• (1550)

I notice that Members of that Party are drifting all over the House, continuously leaving the benches of the Opposition and wandering over to take a back seat on the Liberal side. For example, the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan (Mr. McRae) is an ex-NDPer, and recently we had another illustration of someone wandering over from the NDP to the Liberal Party. In any event, Mr. Speaker, it is not much of a philosophical switch at all.

This, then, is the Liberal attitude which they show us today and have shown us on several occasions in the past where they needlessly imposed closure. They say: "Look at us; we are the rulers and we are going to show you people in the House of