

without the Progressive Conservative opposition rising to claim there were scandals, that representatives or friends of the government had behaved shockingly. That is an old, lowdown traditional political trick of theirs. Every year, the Progressive Conservatives have nothing better to do than to try to discredit the government's authority and the integrity of the politicians who are members of the Liberal Party of Canada. Not one of them has gone before the courts and been condemned as a result of the alleged scandals dug up by the Progressive Conservatives. Never in all those so-called scandals that were supposedly exposed has anyone been found guilty before the courts!

In the case of the uranium affair, the Canadian government did absolutely nothing improper or illegal. We followed standard procedure; we have nothing to hide. The matter is now before the courts where it will be settled and decided whether or not a few companies broke the law in Canada. No aspect whatsoever of government activity is involved in the matter. To my mind, the irresponsible and unacceptable behaviour of the opposition in this connection is a complete aberration.

● (1500)

[English]

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, what we just saw in the tawdry and hysterical performance by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) was culminated by the use of closure for the fifth time in 25 years in this Parliament. It has been used five times in 25 years; yet it has been used two times by this government within the past 12 months. What we see is a pattern developing on the part of this government of gagging Parliament, of attempting in this instance to padlock Parliament to prevent—

Mr. Ouellet: That is because of the abuse of rules by the opposition!

Mr. Beatty: —the representatives of the people of Canada from discharging their business on behalf of their constituents.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, let us take a look at the history of closure the five times it has been used in the past 25 years. The first time was when the Liberals used it to gag Parliament on the pipeline debate. They said it was urgent that debate be ended and that the vote be taken. The second time was when the Liberals again gagged Parliament in the 1960s to terminate the flag debate. The third time was when they again used the closure rule to gag Parliament, using the same arguments as have been used today by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, to change the rules of Parliament to facilitate the government's getting its business through, unchecked by Parliament. That was the third time.

Summer Recess

Mr. Ouellet: Oh, come on! Unchecked!

Mr. Beatty: The fourth time was last fall, when this government imposed closure to prevent debate on the Constitution of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Mr. Ouellet: After how many weeks?

Mr. Beatty: In all of those instances the government justified its activity on the ground that there were important matters that Parliament should be considering, that there was an urgent public business to be done; that there was a matter which should be dealt with by Parliament, that the debate had gone on long enough on the matter, and that it was time to move on to something else. How does this differ, now that the government has used closure for the first time in the history of the Commonwealth to close down Parliament, to padlock Parliament, to prevent debate from taking place? What is the urgent business which faces Parliament today?

If one listens to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and reads the speech he made last night, the urgent business is that it is time for MPs to go on holiday. That is the urgent business. That is the reason closure is being used, according to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Last evening Madam Speaker prevented the government from closing this Parliament down through subterfuge.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Beatty: It was a courageous decision which Madam Speaker made. Let me read, just briefly, two sentences from that decision. She said:

My ruling is very much based on the right of hon. members to express themselves in this House. This is the most sacred thing that the Speaker must protect—

Yet within one hour of Madam Speaker's preventing this government from closing down Parliament through subterfuge, and within one hour of Madam Speaker's saying that the most sacred right of Parliament and the most sacred obligation of any Speaker is to protect the right of freedom of speech of parliamentarians, this minister, whose conduct in the uranium investigation is very much in question in the House, moved closure which will prevent this Parliament from investigating the conduct of this government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Beatty: The minister said that nothing has gone wrong, that there was no illegal act and that there was no cover-up. Let us take a look at the facts and the history of cover-up on the part of this government in the uranium cartel.

Mr. Ouellet: Repeat the speech that your colleague made last night!