

Government Orders

The point I am making is that, however distinguished our representatives, we remain a minority in this place. However great the speeches made in this House by Quebec members from whatever political party, when a vote is held—and the hon. member for Ontario has seen it for himself as well as we all did—the majority rules and the vote from the quietest of member cancels that of the most talkative and convincing one. In that context, I can agree with the hon. member only as far as to say that very distinguished representatives from Quebec have sat in this House.

[English]

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Madam Speaker, I have a comment and a question for my hon. friend.

As we know the current bill suspends the Electoral Boundaries Redistribution Act simply because government members are not happy with the outcome of the act. That is very frightening. Just because they are not happy with the outcome they take Draconian measures such as introducing time allocation after only four hours of debate on a bill and pushing the agenda through the House without giving adequate time for debate.

I really believe that every member should have an opportunity to speak freely and reasonably in this House. What if the whole focus of this bill was different and we were in effect restricting a party in this House whose views were not agreed with by the other parties in the House. It could very easily happen because as a member of Reform I disagree with the separatist views of the Bloc Quebecois.

Suppose we decided because the rules of the House offer a lot of privileges to the Official Opposition we wanted to restrict those and introduced time allocation to do so and rammed it through the House.

I just wonder how the hon. member would feel about that type of reaction and program.

[Translation]

Mr. Langlois: Madam Speaker, the hon. member's question reminds me of question period in the afternoon or on Friday morning when a government member plants a question for his minister. I thank the hon. member.

We voted against the time allocation motion and against closure because it is unacceptable, particularly in a parliamentary government. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is right to insist, especially since it would have been so easy to

make plans in the parliamentary agenda to table the bill ten days or two weeks earlier. I share the hon. member's concerns on this.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South): Madam Speaker, as I follow the debate, it would appear that the situation here is not a vote so much to do something as opposed to maybe stopping something which may put us into a situation which would be unacceptable to Canadians.

Members have asked for time to discuss and time allocation would restrict that. Is it not the intent of the overall motion and the process to allow more time for members throughout the entire House to have a fuller discussion about the criteria for boundary setting and to ensure that Canadians are going to be well represented in the House through these major changes?

• (1225)

There is time to do this. I wonder if the member would agree that taking the time to do this job properly is the right course of action.

[Translation]

Mr. Langlois: Madam Speaker, I find it quite strange and somewhat unacceptable as a parliamentarian to see the hon. member for Waterloo refer to the relevance of the debate in the question and comment period, when he spent all his time attacking our colleagues from the Reform Party, not on the substance of the motion but on their behaviour in the House, which we refrain from doing. This is my only comment.

[English]

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops): Madam Speaker, I would like to say that this is indeed a dark day for democracy. It is a dark day for the parliamentary system.

I remember it took the Conservatives at least a few months before they brought in the heavy hand of closure or time allocation. I know that the previous Prime Minister, Mr. Mulroney, held this place in contempt. For him Parliament was a nuisance, something that he had to put up with as he imposed his agenda on the people of Canada.

In opposition the Liberal Party would often join with the New Democrats and criticize the government for using the heavy hand of closure so flippantly, so easily. I know we do not hear jackboots in the hallways of Parliament yet and I know we do not see brown shirts around this place, but I will tell you, Madam Speaker, the people of Canada should consider this to be an early warning. Once again we have seen a government that is prepared to change the standing orders to give almost exclusive powers to