

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It is for this reason I am annoyed because this stupid motion is being put forward today, and my colleagues and I will vote against it. What is before us is Bill C-83. Gallup polls and other indications make it fairly clear, I think, that the majority of Canadians want legislation along the lines of Bill C-83. But there are requests from all over the country, even from those who support the bill, for improvements and modifications which might be made in committee.

There is, however, a sizeable minority of Canadians who do not like some of the things that are contained in the bill. They have a feeling it is being railroaded through the House. The minister's action today will reinforce that feeling. As for the minority which does not like the gun control measures, I suggest they have a right for their voices to be heard through members in the House who wish to express their objections.

I used the word "stupid" with respect to this motion. I did so deliberately because I think that what is being done today hurts the cause of Bill C-83. It is hurting the cause of the whole peace and security legislation package. I wish the President of the Privy Council had paid attention to the advice some of us tried to give him not to bring in this motion.

May I also point out, in addition to the statistics put on the record by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton in connection with the debate up to this point, that the motion the minister has made is not as generous as he would like to suggest. He said there would be four more days; and there were interjections during the remarks of the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton repeating that phrase—"Four more days". We learned today that those days are to be Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of next week, and Monday of the following week. So two of those days are short days, the Wednesday and the Friday. Further, on Thursday, Friday and Monday there are private members' hours and I see nothing in the motion which would turn those hours into time spent on Bill C-83. So the total number of hours is limited.

I suggest, too, that there is another form of closure which comes into play when a motion such as this is made. When there is no time limit placed on debate, members of the opposition speak one after another and government members sit back; they do not like to speak because they know that to do so would lengthen discussion. But when there is a time limit on the proceedings they rise freely to take part in debate, and since the majority of the members of the House are Liberals they can claim, and expect, a majority of the time to be allotted to them in the days available.

Mr. Blais: And why not?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. I would remind hon. members that during this debate no member may speak for more than ten minutes. Experienced members know that once a speaker has the floor he should be heard without interruption.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): That interruption from the other side reveals the basic attitude of the Liberal majority. The Liberals think they run the place,

Business of the House

they think they own it. I was not suggesting that Liberal members do not have the right to speak in this debate. I was pointing out that by taking up 50 or 60 per cent of the time available, they cut down considerably the amount of time available to the opposition.

Mr. Blais: Why not?

An hon. Member: Because we shall be under closure.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I shall spend no more time dealing with these idiotic interruptions. The fact of the matter is that the motion contains the elements of double closure. It provides for four days, two of which are short and on three of which there are private members' hours. It also sets up a situation in which members of one party can take up more than half the time available. This means that opportunity for the opposition to express its point of view will be seriously curtailed. Again, I say the President of the Privy Council has been most unwise. In my opinion he has done a disservice to the good which is contained in the bill; he has done a disservice to the whole peace and security package, and he has done a disservice to the effort to arrive at arrangements for conducting our business in an orderly fashion. We shall be voting against the motion.

[Translation]

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, as both House leaders spoke before me, namely the leader of the official opposition and the leader of the NDP, I ought to express the views of the members of the Social Credit Party of Canada. We strongly object to the adoption of this motion under Standing Order 75C to restrict the debate on Bill C-83 to four days only on second reading.

This important piece of legislation deals on the one hand with gun control and on the other hand with all the measures the government intends to take in order to reduce the crime rate in this country. I think that anyone who supports this motion accepts at the same time that a member's role be downgraded. It is even an undemocratic measure because it cuts short forcibly the debates in this House. Why then are members elected to come and discuss in this House if the government keeps on resorting to this so-called special legislation to end the debate to suit itself?

In my view, it is a misuse of authority, it is dictatorship, and history has proved that those administrators who have indulged in dictatorial methods were most unpopular at least with those under their jurisdiction.

I hope that all the members of this House will take a stand against that proposal, even Liberal members. Otherwise, I shall have to conclude that there is some truth in the tale about the frog which is gradually heated in a pot of water until it bursts. I shall also have to infer that this tale applies to the letter to those speechless members whose powers, responsibilities and even right to speak are being gradually eroded and who allow themselves to be quietly boiled by the government House leader and the cabinet without so much as raising an objection.

No matter how the government leader explains away that his motion is not a motion of closure, it is nevertheless a gag. I will not accept this attitude on the part of the government. Nor do I accept the rule which was passed in