

*Time Allocation*

afraid. They really are afraid that they cannot control the power of public opinion.

As we pointed out, Members opposite brought in a wonderful Bill dealing with employment equity with a lot of glitz and glamour. In fact, it was a mere piece of cosmetics which had nothing to do with the recommendations of Judge Abella. When they found that the cosmetics were quickly wiped away, they brought in closure. They were not prepared to accept the judgment of the Canadian people as it was expressed in this House. They could not take the heat. In so doing they are denying once again the responsibilities of this Chamber.

Perhaps the most important break with precedent, the one that will haunt this Chamber for many years to come, is the fact that they have taken something which has for decades been a matter of all-Party judgment and agreement and are turning it into a partisan division. This is something which affects every Member of Parliament regardless of Party, platform or attachment. It goes to the fundamental rights of representation with which we are deeply concerned. By doing this they will produce a spectre which will hang like a shadow over Parliaments to come. They are politicizing something which should not be political because it goes to the basis of our Constitution and the fundamentals on which our country is based, how people are heard and represented. With this closure motion they are not giving the proper opportunity for the dialogue and dynamics which take place in this House where a proper agreement can be reached between Members of all Parties.

Why is this Government so willing, indeed anxious, to tamper with a tradition and convention which has been one of the touchstones of parliamentary democracy for so many years? Is it because the Government does not care? I do not think that is the case because many Members in the Conservative caucus, Members such as the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), have exemplified over their parliamentary careers a dedication to this House. I think they are once again responding out of a sense of fear. The Government has gone through a period of total unravelling, total and complete disarray, and it now wants to get its house in order. It must show that it is being decisive and get all this legislation passed by the Christmas break. In other words, in serving its own political expedient ends of trying to get back some control of its agenda, it will victimize this Chamber. It will put this Chamber and its traditions on the altar of its own communications strategists. That is a terrible way to try to govern the country.

● (1220)

The Member for Cochrane-Superior (Mr. Penner) suggested that the backroom strategists who run the computers and public opinion surveys are saying that the Government is going to be in deep trouble in the next election and that it can save its skin by altering boundaries. The Members opposite cry: "Oh, no, it is not possible". If that is the case, why did they introduce an amendment to Section 13.1(b) to change the formula by which those alterations can be made, to break

away from the formula which said that boundaries must be fixed as closely as possible to representation, and to say that we are going to have more flexibility? That is a terrifying word.

It is not unknown in the history of this country or of other democracies for that to be the ultimate power of an executive in trouble and fearful for its life. The last resort of scoundrels is the gerrymander. The last way that they can protect themselves is by trying to rearrange and reorganize boundaries to suit their political interests. That is the problem. Mr. Speaker, that suspicion will remain because of this closure motion. They have set that motive in place and their actions speak louder than their words. Moving this motion and imposing closure on something which they know, deep in their hearts, they have no business imposing closure on, is going to haunt deliberations of those commissions and will create a suspicion across the country as to what is really afoot.

We are going to be very careful, Mr. Speaker, to watch that they do not do it. We hope that in these last moments some sense of the tradition of this House will prevail and members of the caucus will realize that if there is any motion on which closure should be withdrawn, it is on this Bill.

**Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt):** Mr. Speaker, I have never seen more disreputable behaviour by a Government than that which we are witnessing today. This is the sixth time since the Government has been in office that it has introduced closure. There are 211 government Members and 70 opposition Members, yet the Government has to use closure to crush the Opposition. I could be very flattered by the fact that the Government has to use this sledgehammer to crack the Opposition. I could be very flattered that we are doing such an effective job. However, what is the Government afraid of? It is afraid of democracy.

The government Members ran around through the summer of 1984 saying that they would find a new way. Is this the new way? This is the way the Liberals did it and the present Government criticized them at that time. This is not the new way, but the Liberal way. They are a bunch of retread Liberals over there.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, can you imagine a responsible Government bringing in closure on a redistribution Bill which denies representation by population? That is what Bill C-74 really does. It flies in the face of "rep by pop". The Government is bringing in closure to snuff out what some might consider the ultimate in a democratic system. Members of Parliament come to this place to represent the population of the country.

The Conservative Member who spoke talked about the bells, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** He's a ding-a-ling.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** The Hon. Member says he is a ding-a-ling. I cannot say that, Mr. Speaker, and I would not countenance