

*Business of the House*

to all other Hon. Members. I appreciate being allowed to take the time of the House to do just that.

**Mr. Gray (Windsor West):** Mr. Speaker, we are profoundly disappointed that the Government has chosen to choke off debate on a matter as important as the reinstatement of the death penalty. This is not consistent with what happened when this matter was before the House in the past and it is certainly not consistent with the words of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) in his eloquent speech opposing the death penalty.

I do want to make an inquiry and I hope I am doing it in a proper manner. In light of the remarks of the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski), I wonder when there might be rulings on the question of privilege and point of order raised in this connection Friday last. I hope my inquiry will not be taken in any way as attempting to expedite your consideration of the matter, but I feel that I must ask the question in view of what the Deputy Prime Minister has just said.

**Mr. Riis:** Mr. Speaker, I am very, very disappointed that we have to do this. First, I want to say to the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski) that at least we appreciate the notice so that on such a critical vote, Members of Parliament from all sides will be adequately notified that the vote will take place at one o'clock early Tuesday morning. However, I want to say how profoundly sad we are that this has taken place.

So far during the debate on capital punishment, 82 per cent of the Members of the House of Commons have as yet been unable to make a speech.

**Mr. Fennell:** That's not true.

**Mr. Riis:** Eighty-two per cent have been unable to make a speech in the House of Commons. We believed the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) when he said that the people of Canada would see a full and free debate and a vote in the House of Commons. We took that to mean that those Members of Parliament who wished to make a speech on capital punishment would have the opportunity to do so. Now, when 82 per cent of the Members have yet to make a speech on capital punishment, the Government is introducing a motion that will force a vote after just a few more hours of debate. That is something that we find unacceptable. Once again, we find that the Prime Minister's word is not to be taken as offered. The Prime Minister has said one thing and now the Government is doing another. That seems to be a trend that we find very, very disappointing.

I think the people of Canada will also think that they have been shortchanged. They have a right to know why their Members of Parliament are voting as they will vote at one o'clock on Tuesday morning. It is not unrealistic to expect an opportunity to be at least provided to those Hon. Members who wish to make a speech to explain to their constituents and the people of Canada why they will vote as they will.

On behalf of the New Democrats, I want to register our profound disappointment. We feel that this is an inappropriate

use of parliamentary procedure. Never was the heavy hand of closure meant to limit a debate on what is literally a life-and-death issue.

On behalf of the New Democrats, I say that this action is inappropriate. This is not what the Prime Minister promised the people of Canada. It is something that we feel will detract from the esteem the public now holds for the House of Commons and the Parliament of Canada. If Hon. Members who wish to speak on an issue as crucial as this cannot, with 82 per cent of the Members of the House of Commons not yet having had the opportunity to make a speech on this critical issue, the people of Canada will feel that they too have been betrayed.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques):** Mr. Speaker, I too want to say how deeply disappointed I am that the Government should have decided to impose closure on the capital punishment debate.

The decision has a special impact because this is supposed to be a free vote, yet it belittles the authority of the whips, and each Member expected, or perhaps the majority of Members were expecting to have an opportunity to air their views and explain their vote.

I also think that the majority of Canadians really thought that their Members of Parliament or most of them would speak to this issue.

Speaking for myself, I may be among those who will not be able to take part in the debate and who would have liked to explain why they will be voting against the resolution to restore capital punishment.

I want to be brief, and in conclusion I would say that it is rather strange that the Government chose to impose closure on this kind of vote. Ironically, closure, which is also called the guillotine, will now apply to a bill aimed at reinstating capital punishment.

• (1450)

[*English*]

**Mr. Nowlan:** Mr. Speaker, I have been sitting here listening to the House Leader on this very sensitive and serious issue. Having been involved in three other debates on capital punishment in my term as a Member, knowing full well the emotion and division this debate creates because it deals with individual conscience, I am frankly rather disappointed at the reaction from those on the opposition side, and I have sat there myself. I was hoping the House Leaders would have been able to reach an agreement to shorten the time for the debate and extend the hours. If Members opposite really wanted to give every Member an opportunity to participate in the debate, surely that would have been the simple thing to do. House Leaders could have come together for that purpose, not for partisan political reasons in order to try and castigate the