

Extension of Sittings

Members on the Government side of the House ignore this book. Members on the Government side of the House remove rule after rule. It certainly makes bed-time reading easier, but it does not help Members of Parliament to work through the process.

● (1720)

The Government should have more respect for its own new Members if not for the new Members on this side of the House. As a new parliamentarian, I am shocked, dismayed, and saddened by what I have seen in this House for the past week. I am sure the constituents of Mission—Coquitlam, no matter what their political stripe, are as dismayed and shocked as I am by the performance of the Government to date.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, in your capacity to urge the Government to respect all Canadians and to respect other Members of the House of Commons be they honourable or otherwise, and to respect the rules and the traditions—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. There is no such thing as “otherwise” in this House. They are all Honourable Members.

Ms. Langan: I would like to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that had we been given the rules—

Some Hon. Members: Withdraw!

Ms. Langan:—and the training, we would not be making these kinds of mistakes. My apologies.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to have this opportunity to speak in the House today. I want to express at the outset my thanks to my constituents in Kingston and the Islands who did me the honour of electing me to represent them in this Parliament. Like the speakers who have preceded me, I regret that my first speech in this Chamber is on a procedural motion, as this one is. I think it is unfortunate that the Government has chosen to take the first week of a new session of Parliament to abandon the traditional speeches that proceed in this Chamber, the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, and try to ram through a Bill to force the Free Trade Agreement on Canadians.

The Government is the master of its own misfortune in this place, but I will turn to that later in my speech. For the moment, I would like to discuss the application of the closure rule which the Government is using to force this measure through the House.

Twice already we have had notice of closure, and today we have had one of the motions put and voted on in this House. I would like to go back to the history of that rule. It was introduced by a Conservative Government originally in 1913, and was used to ram through a certain naval Bill at that time, as I recall.

Subsequently in 1917, it was used on a couple of occasions to rig the election so the Conservatives could gain re-election in the general election of 1919. It was also used again on a more famous occasion by another government in 1956.

None of the Members who are in the House today were present on that occasion, as I understand it. They have all left the Chamber. I listened with interest to the speech of my friends in the New Democratic Party. They quoted Mr. Diefenbaker during the course of the pipeline debate. I will not repeat those words, but it seems to me that they embody the view of the Conservative Party on closure.

I note that in 1957, during the election campaign that year, Mr. Diefenbaker, who was then the Leader of the Conservative Party, although my friends opposite seem to have forgotten this fact, campaigned on a platform to abolish the closure rule in this House. Indeed, in the session of 1957-58, he introduced a motion that would have eliminated the rule, but he did not proceed with it. It was another broken Tory promise. However, I do not think Mr. Diefenbaker and his Government ever used closure. In 1964, we had, of course, closure once again. After months and months on the flag debate, the closure rule was applied by the then government to bring that lengthy debate to an end.

Mr. McDermid: A Liberal Government.

Mr. Milliken: That is correct. The person who spoke out most vociferously against the use of the rule was a person who was a member of the present administration until his resignation in January, 1987. That person was Mr. Erik Neilsen, the former Hon. Member for Yukon. He had a lot to say about the Government's use of closure in 1964. I would like to quote him because, of course, he will be fresh in the minds of many of the members on the opposite side of the House. I quote from page 11059 of *Hansard* of December 11, 1964:

“The procedure of closure has been repugnant to the sense of fair play of the Canadian people. My own personal view is that never in parliamentary debate should there be a muzzling of free debate. They will say they were forced into this by a fatuous opposition. Surely we had the right to debate this issue,—”