

to western Canada, that is, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. The Liberals stalled that Bill. Indeed, they refused to pass it in order for it to be put in place for the 1984 election. They committed a gross insult to every single western Canadian.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thacker: I appreciate that there are only 40 Liberals who sit in this place today. One of the reasons that there are only 40 and none of any consequence from the West is this great insult. Thus, here we are in 1985, a new Bill has been presented to the House but only after a White Paper has been produced. The White Paper had enormous coverage and input. A Bill was then drafted which went to committee. Witnesses came before the committee and explained how they felt the Bill should be changed. The Government House Leader incorporated those changes and the Bill was then brought for debate. Now we see this mindless ringing of bells and the opposition Members not being prepared to make their arguments and then vote on the Bill.

Mr. de Jong: Look who's talking! Boy, a Tory concerned about ringing bells!

Mr. Benjamin: You should know.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Thacker: I can tell all Members that those bells would ring another 15 days if the Liberal Party ever came to power and put in place a national energy program which robbed and raped one region of the country. It was absolutely against all Liberal principles, and many Liberal Members, some of whom survived the last election, agreed with that again and again.

● (1210)

I agree with time allocation. It is important to get this Bill through. The commissioners will have to fan out across the country to do their work. After they have done their work it has to be put into legislation. A Bill has to be presented in the House and there will then be all sorts of consideration and debate. We need to have this legislation so that new riding associations can be created, the boundaries can be changed, and the moneys can be adjusted and allocated between the various associations so that Canadians can get used to the new ridings in order to cast their votes properly in 1988 or 1989. Therefore, I stand in favour of this motion and make no apologies.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg-Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the first sign when someone knows he is in trouble is when he starts using bullying tactics.

Mr. de Jong: The Liberals know. This man speaks from experience.

Mr. Axworthy: Over the past few weeks we had closure on the income tax Bill. That Bill was of incredibly vital concern for every Canadian citizen. It had hundreds and hundreds of

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tax measures which needed careful examination by Members of Parliament. However, this Government ordained that closure be applied before anyone has had a chance to make his or her voice heard and before a committee of parliamentarians could exercise their duties as elected representatives to examine public expenditures on behalf of their constituents. We have closure being applied, as my friend from Cochrane-Superior pointed out, to Bills which were not of urgent necessity. This is becoming a bad habit. The Government is doing this because it has lost its ability to manage the House. The Conservatives have lost their ability to organize their own caucus in such a way as to put together properly a parliamentary agenda. As a result, they are exercising this kind of defensive bullying tactic. In the meantime they are doing something very serious to this Chamber.

You realize, Mr. Speaker, that every time a Government makes a decision like this it sets a precedent. Do you remember those brave words in the election campaign when the now Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) said he was going to return civility to Parliament? He used the wrong word. He has returned buffoonery to Parliament. He was going to make Parliament the chief decision-making body of the land. He was going to restore its dignity. He was going to give individual Members of Parliament a new sense of responsibility in exercising independent judgment. What has been the result? Four closure motions in the last two weeks. Is that not an interesting exercise of giving this body a new sense of dignity and responsibility? What an incredible travesty. What hypocrisy. Members opposite have the nerve to make those kinds of claims and then walk into this House and exercise the guillotine without even having the honesty to blush when they do it.

The Conservative Member who just spoke tried to put the best face on this thing. We have to let the electoral commissioners go to work, he said. However, there was a well-constructed and well-debated distribution plan which had already gone through all the parliamentary steps and which would have ensured that there would not be uncertainty in the next election. However, this Government threw it out. Members opposite changed their minds.

That Member said the Opposition was responsible for stalling measures which would have given more representation to western Canada. However, he forgets that the Bill which had been debated and was in its final stages gave far more seats to western Canada than the Bill we are now debating. Where has he been? If he really was interested in his own Province of Alberta, or the other provinces, he would know they had more seats under the 1984 Bill than they have under this Bill. Instead, they have gone through a number of variations on this theme. They brought in something first involving 287 seats and now 295. What is more, Members opposite have not given Canadians in the different regions the opportunity to understand their shenanigans, to find out what they are about. They are denying the fundamental right of this House to be the crucible in which that kind of information is properly discussed and communicated to people across this country. They are